

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND STUDENT
SELF-EFFICACY IN ALASKAN MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Culturally responsive teaching may provide practices and dispositions which support closing the achievement gap between minority and Caucasian student populations. For this research, culturally responsive teaching can be considered as teaching practices that address students' specific cultural characteristics. These characteristics include common practices such as language, values and traditions but also include concepts such as communication, learning styles, and relationship norms. The research also presents a definition of culturally responsive teaching that extends beyond curriculum and instruction to focus on student teacher relationships, empathy, and the teacher as learner. This research explores the beliefs and practices around Culturally Responsive Teaching in ten Alaskan Middle Schools. A mixed-methods, sequential explanatory research design was used to answer the research questions: 1. How do teachers identify what is culturally responsive teaching, and what is not? 2. How is culturally responsive teaching implemented in Alaskan middle schools? 3. How is culturally responsive teaching connected to student self-efficacy in Alaskan middle schools? Although culturally responsive teaching has become a recognized practice in the fields of teacher preparation and professional development for teachers, the working definitions as well as evaluation tools are inadequate to describe the actual practice that teachers enact when they are engaged in culturally responsive teaching. Despite state regulations requiring Alaska school districts to include teaching practice of the Alaska Cultural Standards in teacher evaluations, there is only limited focused research available about the implementation of the standards in classrooms. Through semi-structured interviews and surveys with teachers and principals, formal classroom observations, as well as a student self-efficacy survey, this research addresses the lack of research and understanding regarding the relationship between culturally responsive teaching and self-efficacy for middle school students. This study identified the integration of local culture and language into academic content areas, teaching through culture, and the establishment of positive, respectful working relationships with students as promising practices for culturally responsive teaching.

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Chapter One: Introduction

International economic forces, as well as societal and governmental changes have resulted in disparate educational opportunities, especially for minority students and students of lower socioeconomic status, even in affluent, industrialized nations (Ball, 2013). An analysis of two international achievement tests: Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) suggests there is significant inequality globally based on institutional features of schooling systems, which significantly impact students of lower socioeconomic status (Ammermueller, 2013). Although there are encouraging achievement data from countries like Finland, which features a largely homogenous student population, the global focus developing “human capital” (education as a means to economic power) as the basis of education policy continues to widen inequalities across the globe (Walker, 2012). The achievement gap for minority students in the United States is becoming more evident as the disparity between income levels becomes more pronounced (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). This achievement gap has widened in Alaska, particularly for Alaska Native and American Indian (AN/AI) students (Brown, 2015).

In the United States the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has had a disproportionately negative impact on indigenous students. As reported by the Harvard Civil Rights Project, the legislation has resulted in problems for the American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawai‘ian schools. These problems include (a) unrealistic standards; (b) unfair expectations; (c) disproportionately negative impacts on high-poverty schools; (d) emphasis on a narrow set of outcomes; and (e) the use of theories of education reform that do not work in practice (McCarty, 2009)

Several studies suggest culturally responsive teaching positively impacts student learning (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2011). For this research, culturally responsive teaching can be considered as teaching practices that address students’ specific cultural characteristics. Terms such as culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally sustainable teaching will be synonymous with culturally responsive teaching. Further, several studies suggest that culturally relevant teaching and using culturally relevant examples impact student achievement for Native Hawai‘ian students (Boggs, Watson-Gegeo, & McMillen, 1985; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) for African American students (Moses & Cobb, 2001), and for Alaska Native students (Lipka, Mohatt, & Ilutsik, 2014).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

There is a disparity between the achievement of minority and indigenous students and the general population throughout the United States (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). Referred to as the *achievement gap*, this disparity is documented through numerous national norm-referenced tests (Cohen, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, Apfel, & Brzustoski, 2009). For example, the Educator Quality and Quantity Report conducted by the Citizens for the Educational Advancement of Alaska's Children (CEAAC) presented several findings regarding the preparation of Alaskan students. The report provides a very recent snapshot on the academic achievement of Alaskan students; Alaska's K- 12 education system currently produces too many students unready for college or career. Only about 40% of Alaska's high school graduates attended postsecondary institutions in 2012, compared to 68% nationally. In 2013, half of first-time University of Alaska (UA) first year students required remedial courses. Of that group, 81% required remedial math and 50% required remedial English (Covey, Adams, & Wohlforth, 2015).

The problem of student achievement is exasperated by the high teacher turnover in Alaska. The CEACC report also found that although Alaska hires about 1,000 new teachers every year, less than 36% come from Alaska. In order to address this shortage, the state hires teachers from outside Alaska. Teachers new to Alaska are twice as likely to leave in the first three years of employment (Covey et al., 2015). There are rural districts in Alaska that exceed a 50% turnover rate annually.

1.2 Rationale and Need for the Study

Middle school students, as adolescents, are at a critical stage in their psychological development and their identity regarding motivation and goal setting at school. Teachers play a critical role in that discovery process (Murdock & Miller, 2003). With the pronounced achievement gap affecting Alaskan student progress towards post-secondary education, there is a critical need to better understand the connections between culturally responsive teaching practices, student success, and self-efficacy. There are strong convictions among educators and Alaska Natives that culturally responsive teaching is not only the most effective means for students to learn, but that it's also critical for the development of young people (i.e., student success).

There is a firm belief within many Native tribal communities and professional Native educators that this cultural context is absolutely essential if one is to succeed academically and to build a meaningful life as adults (Demmert, 2001). This study contributes to the research on how culturally responsive teaching practices connect to student success and self-efficacy in Alaska's middle schools. Other factors influencing student success and self-efficacy that arise during the study will also be explored.

In order to address the achievement gap in Alaska, critical practices like culturally responsive teaching must be identified and defined. Although the achievement gap extends to most areas of student performance and achievement, the Alaska "Report Cards to the Public" (AK-EED, 2015b) articulate this issue as it relates to (a) dropout rates, (b) the High School Qualifying Exam and (c) Standards-based Assessments (SBAs). This adds to the knowledgebase on culturally responsive teaching and effective teaching practices to further understand the instructional factors related to this achievement gap.

1.2.1 The achievement gap in Alaska.

The primary means for analyzing the achievement gap between demographic groups in Alaska is standardized testing. There have been many studies that have attributed scores on standardized tests to concepts other than classroom instruction and learning gains. A recent study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that schools that improve test scores address skills other than cognitive skills, such as academic strategies (Finn et al., 2014).

There has been general consensus among researchers that standardized tests, especially in high-stakes contexts, do not measure the transfer of domains of knowledge and academic skill (Amrein & Berliner, 2002). In this study that analyzed the results of standardized testing in 18 states with high stakes consequences for performance, the conclusions further reinforced established perceptions that standardized tests do not measure what stakeholders value in terms of a quality education.

At the present time, there is no compelling evidence from a set of states with high-stakes testing policies that those policies result in transfer to the broader domains of knowledge and skill for which high-stakes test scores must be indicators. Because of this, the high-stakes tests being used today do not, as a general rule, appear valid as indicators of genuine learning, of the types of learning that approach the American ideal of what an educated person knows and can do. Moreover, as predicted by the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, data from high-stakes

testing programs too often appear distorted and corrupted (Amrein & Berliner, 2002, p. 1).

Although standardized tests are generally not considered to be valid indicators of learning, the data are the only measure of academic achievement available for comparison at this time.

1.2.2 Dropout rates.

Research suggests that high dropout rates are often predictors for low student achievement (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007). Alaska dropout rates for AN/AI for grades 7-12 is significantly higher compared to other demographic groups (Table 1). Regardless of the causes, the difference between populations of ethnic groups over this time period is significant.

One of the areas where the achievement gap is most prevalent is in terms of dropout rates. By comparing Alaska Native/American Indian (AN/AI) students and White students, as they are the largest ethnic groups in the state, the gap is significant. Table 1 presents the Alaska dropout rates for grades 7-12 by ethnicity for 2015-16. Although the overall school age population declined slightly (about 5%) from 61,130 to 58,071 during 2002-03, the first year this report was published, until 2014-15, the number of students identifying as AN/AI declined more precipitously, by almost 40% (1,332 to 805). There is no explanation as to why the AN/AI population declined to this degree over the time period selected and it is possible it is related to overall population trends for the state. Regardless of the causes, the difference between populations of ethnic groups over this time period is significant.

Table 1: Alaska Dropout Rates for Grades 7-12 by Ethnicity, 2015-16

Race/Ethnic Group	Enrollment		Dropout Rate by Ethnicity		Percentage of Total Dropouts by Race/Ethnicity	
	Total 7-12	% of Total Enrollment	Dropouts Count 7-12	Dropouts % 7-12	Dropouts Count 7-12	% of Total Dropouts 7-12
Alaska Native American Indian	13,124	22.6%	873	6.7%	873	38.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5,431	9.4%	150	2.8%	150	6.6%
Black	1,967	3.4%	89	4.5%	89	3.9%
Hispanic	3,823	6.6%	144	3.8%	144	6.3%
White	28,463	49.%	799	2.8%	799	35.2
Two or More Races	5,141	8.9%	213	4.1%	213	9.4%
Statewide Totals	57,949	n/a	2,268	3.9%	2,268	n/a

Note: These data are from the AK-EED State Report Card 2015-16

The data presented in Table 1 have to be interpreted with caution. Although Alaskan schools and districts began reporting dropout and graduation rates in 1993, it wasn't until the Quality Schools Initiative in 1996 that the public and the legislature began to pay attention. Thus, over the time period discussed here, there were reasons for schools and districts to under-report dropouts and to focus resources on retention and there were changes to the way that schools and districts reported out of district transfers. A national study of graduation and dropout rates for AN/AI students by The Civil Rights Project and Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA found that Alaska had a graduation rate of 61.8% for all students, with only a 42% graduation rate for AN/AI, a graduation gap of 19.8% (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2010). Further, only 57% of Alaska Native students graduated on time in 2013 compared to 78% of White students (Brown, 2015). Regardless of which data sources are used, in Alaska there is a persistent, significant achievement gap between AN/AI students and White students.

1.2.3 Alaska high school qualifying exam.

In order to discuss the achievement gap for Alaska Natives/American Indians and other ethnic groups in Alaska, the historical context is very important. In 1998, the Alaska State Legislature passed its *Quality Schools Initiative*. Compared to many states in the continental U.S., Alaska students were doing well compared to their counterparts. In 1996, two years before the legislation that enacted the Quality Schools Initiative, Alaska's 4th and 8th grade students scored higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on average than students in the western region (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming). Alaska students also met the national average for both grade levels in Mathematics (Reese, Jerry, & Ballator, 1997). Thus, there was no concrete evidence or data that compelled the Alaskan legislature to enact the Quality Schools Initiative. However, what began as a collaborative statewide school reform effort eventually was diverted and fundamentally altered by NCLB. In 2004 when NCLB was rolling out to the states, Governor Knowles said:

The federal No Child Left Behind law turned our education dream into a nightmare. Alaska's Quality Schools Initiative was working—raising student scores and teacher standards—until the federal government imposed its one-size-fits-all approach that doesn't fit Alaska. We need to repeal these 1,200 pages of micro-management and return

education decisions to our teachers, parents and school boards. (AK newspaper: The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, 2004)

Importantly, after 2005-06, Alaska no longer used the HSGQE to meet NCLB high school testing requirements, but instead used the Grade 10 Standards-Based Assessment (AK-EED, 2017).

The Alaska high school graduation qualifying exam (HSGQE), developed by McGraw Hill was supposedly based on the Alaska Performance Standards, but AK-EED learned that the company had not developed any new items for the Alaska tests, they were merely drawing from extensive test banks developed for other states. Despite numerous and disparate efforts to achieve close to 100% participation, from 2002 through 2015-16 the state averaged between 92% and 98% participation in the Standards-based Assessments (SBA's) (AK-EED, 2015b). In 2006, approximately 93% of 10th grade students took the HSGQE. Table 2 presents the Grade 10 percentages of students who were either proficient or not proficient in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.

Table 2: Grade 10 Student Proficiency in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics

Race/Ethnic Group	Grade 10 Reading		Grade 10 Writing		Grade 10 Mathematics	
	% Proficient	% Not Proficient	% Proficient	% Not Proficient	% Proficient	% Not Proficient
African American	86.9%	13.1%	71.5	28.5	64.1%	35.9%
AK Native Amer. Indian	80.3%	19.7%	68.1%	31.9%	67.6%	32.4%
Caucasian	96%	4%	87.3%	12.7%	87.8%	12.2%
Hispanic	86.9%	13.1%	73%	27%	71.5%	28.5%
Mixed	88.2%	11.8%	80.1%	19.9%	73.0%	27.0%
Statewide	90.9%	9.1%	81.2%	18.8%	80.6%	19.4%

Note: These data are from the AK-EED State Report Card 2006-07

The state assessment plan was designed to provide students with multiple attempts to pass the tests. The 10th grade data were selected for discussion, because only the 10th grade students were required to take the exam as 10th graders. After the 10th grade, students only took the test if they had failed on a previous attempt on the HSGQE. Although the percentages of

proficient students did generally increase with each grade level, there were other factors such as dropouts and the percentages participating that influenced these scores. Statewide, in all ethnic groups, 73.7% of students were proficient in Reading and 26.3% were not proficient. This compares to only 51.3% of Alaska Natives/American Indian (AN/AI) students who were proficient, with 48.7% not proficient (significantly below the average). Caucasian students were 85.5% proficient with only 14.5% not proficient. This demonstrates a profound and persistent achievement gap in Reading, Writing, and Math.

By 2013, the percentage of AN/AI students who were proficient on the reading component had grown to 66.8%, compared to White students who also improved to a 92% proficient rate. However, even though the achievement gap was reduced to 25.2% over this seven-year period, (a difference of 9%), the fact that the White group was over 90% proficient, meant that only 8% were not proficient, which is a very small number compared to the other group. The achievement gap for mathematics increased over this time period from 19.2% in 2006 to 24.4% in 2013. It is somewhat questionable to compare the scores over this period of time because the tests did change, as well as the cut scores. In the big picture, by 2013 the majority of White students had found a way to become proficient on these tests. Although AN/AI students also made gains in terms of their population groups, the tests still demonstrated an achievement gap, particularly for reading and mathematics.

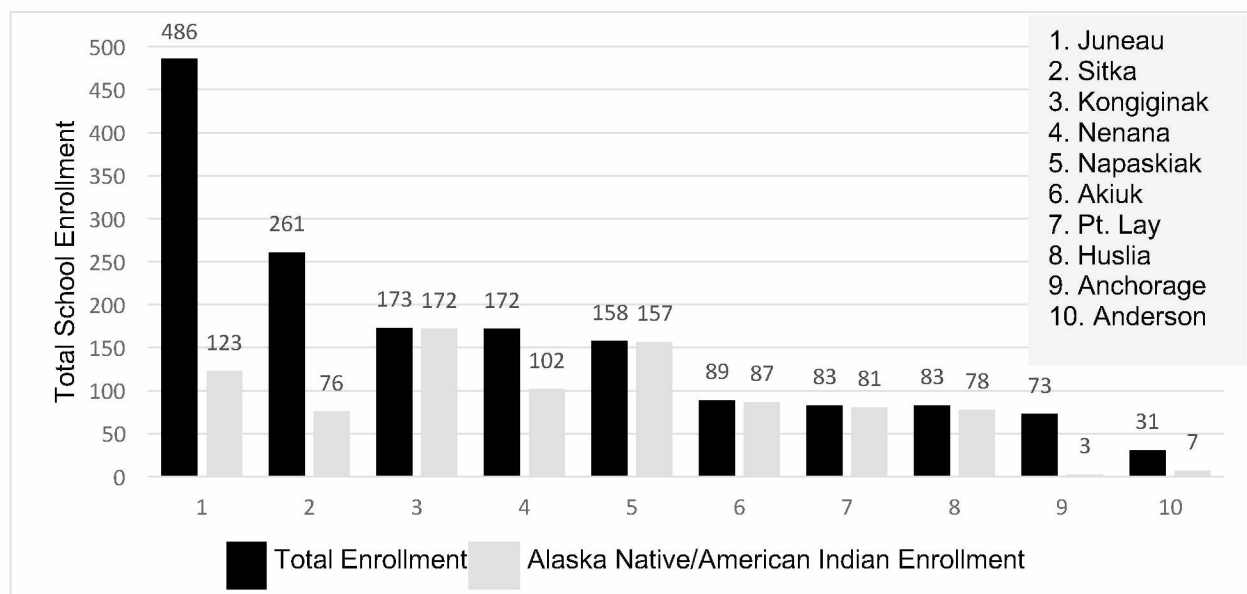
1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to add to the knowledge base on culturally responsive teaching by determining how teachers and principals in Alaska identify culturally responsive teaching, how it is implemented in middle schools, and what connections between culturally responsive teaching and self-efficacy for middle school students may exist. This study will provide critical data about the implementation of cultural standards. The findings of this study will assist educators and educational stakeholders in making informed decisions regarding teaching practice and curriculum.

1.4 Context for the Study, Ten Alaskan Middle Schools

In Alaska the cultural, historical, and environmental context for schools varies dramatically in different regions and across communities. The research sites for this project were selected in order to represent different regions: north, interior, southwest, and southeast and the dominant cultures in the communities where the schools were located: Yup'ik, Tlingit,

Tsimshian, Haida, Athabascan and Inupiaq. This research reflects the diversity of schools and communities in Alaska, that includes the diverse demographics of urban schools (Anchorage, Juneau, Sitka) and schools on the road system (Anderson, Nenana). The road system is the network of highways that connect Anchorage, Fairbanks, Tok and Haines as well as other smaller communities close to the roads. Schools and communities that are not connected by highways, are generally referred to as “rural schools.” The rural schools in this study are situated in small mostly indigenous communities that are not connected by roads. These remote communities are only accessible by plane, boat or snow machines during the winter. Schools were also selected based on the recommendations of district administrators and university faculty who work in the schools based on perceptions of culturally responsive teaching and programming. It is important to note that populations, especially in small rural communities can fluctuate seasonally and year to year as citizens migrate between other rural communities, urban communities and fish camps and other locations as subsistence and employment opportunities dictate. Figure 1 presents the total enrollment for the 2015/16 school year and the enrollment of Alaska Native/American Indian students by participating school.



Note: Complete Enrollment Data by Ethnicity are presented in Table 7

Figure 1: Participating Schools, Total Enrollment, Enrollment of Alaska Native/American Indian

There are five schools: Huslia, Pt. Lay Akiuk, Napaskiak and Kongiginak where the school enrollment is at least 94% (AN/AI). This contrasts with the two larger only urban middle schools (grades 6-8) with Juneau (24%) and Sitka (25%) enrollment of AN/AI. Despite the more diverse student enrollment, less than 50% of the student enrollment at the larger schools is Caucasian. Since there are clearly two types of schools in terms of the basic ethnic/racial composition, the first group of schools, with more than 94% Alaska Native/American Indian students will be considered “rural schools.” The second group that are all connected by the Alaskan road system, are considered “urban schools” for this project. (Note: Juneau and Sitka are connected to the road system by the Alaska Marine Highway). It could be argued that Anderson and Nenana are small rural communities, but since they are connected by the road system and within a 90-minute drive from Fairbanks, they will be considered urban for this project.

All of the research was conducted onsite in the ten middle schools across Alaska, with the exception of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey that was administered online. The interviews, the Student Self-Efficacy Survey, and the classroom observations took place during the fall and spring site visits to each school.

The Equitable Access to Excellent Educators Plan for Alaska had two key findings that are critical to understanding the context for this research (AK-EED, 2015a). First, low income students were “1.8 times more likely to be placed with first year teachers than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of low income students” and, minority students were “3.3 times more likely to be placed with teachers new to the district than students in the quartile of schools with the lowest percentage of low-income students” (p. 11). In other words, access to quality education is a deep-seated equity issue in Alaska. Figure 2 presents the location of the schools in Alaska. The population data are from the U.S. Census Bureau, (2010).

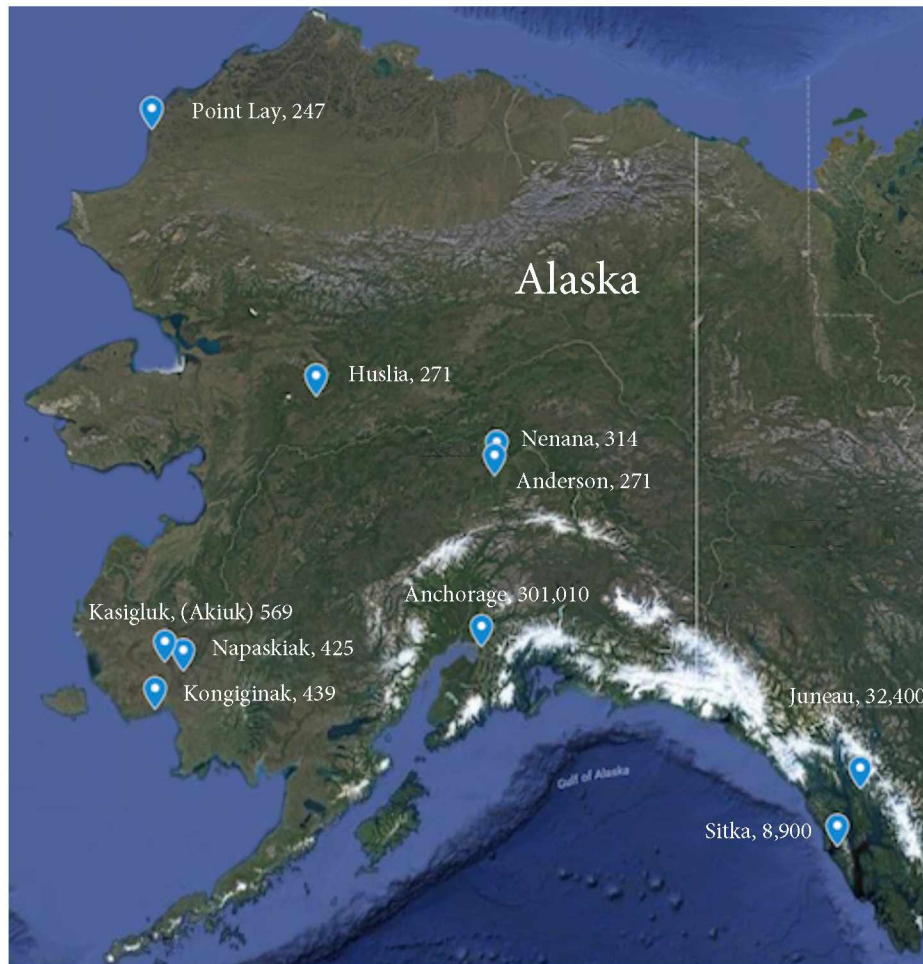


Figure 2: Map of Alaska with Research Sites by Location

It is widely acknowledged in schools across Alaska that implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards has been disparate at best since the original publication in 1998. Although the standards have been adopted by the Alaska State Board of Education and many school districts, basic awareness of the standards varies widely across the state. This study will provide critical data about the implementation across the state, how teachers and principals identify culturally responsive teaching, as well as the connections between culturally responsive teaching and self-efficacy for middle school students. It is important to note that this research takes place during the 2016-17 school year, just after NCLB was replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but before ESSA was implemented in Alaska. Therefore, the effects of NCLB are expected to inform participant perspectives both on culturally responsive teaching and the challenges and barriers affecting implementation.

1.5. Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do teachers identify what is culturally responsive teaching, and what is not?
2. How is culturally responsive teaching implemented in Alaskan middle schools?
3. How is culturally responsive teaching connected to student self-efficacy in Alaskan middle schools?

1.6 Definition of Terms

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Culturally responsive teaching and/or pedagogy has become a catchall phrase for multicultural education. In one study, Geneva Gay defined culturally responsive teaching as teaching practice that employs “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (2002, p. 106). For this research, culturally responsive teaching can be considered as teaching practices that address students’ specific cultural contexts. Characteristics include attributes and beliefs related to: values, traditions, communication and relationship norms. Terms such as culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally sustainable teaching will be synonymous with culturally responsive teaching.

Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief (confidence) about his or her capabilities to execute a specific task within a given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1979). In a school setting for this research, self-efficacy refers to a student’s confidence about achieving personal and academic goals.

Middle School: For this research, middle school will be defined as grades five through nine, although the students will predominately be in grades six through eight. In small schools, it is often necessary for there to be multi-grade arrangements for most content areas. Seven of the research sites will examine middle schools that are housed in community K-12 schools. Three of the larger middle schools are self-contained middle schools without other grade levels: (Sitka, Juneau, and Anchorage).

Rural Schools: In this study, middle schools and communities that are not readily connected to the road system or the Alaska Marine Highway system will be considered rural: (i.e. Kongiginak, Akiuk, Napaskiak, Huslia and Point Lay) will be considered rural.

Urban Schools: Schools that are connected to the road system or the Alaska Marine Highway system will be considered urban schools: (i.e., Sitka, Juneau, Anchorage, Nenana and Anderson) will be considered urban.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study adds to the understanding and knowledge base of cultural responsive teaching and informs rural school districts, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, state education policy makers, public stakeholders, and teacher preparation programs about effective practices to increase student learning.

1.8 Methods

This study utilizes a sequential explanatory design mixed methods approach using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) to answer the research questions. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Table 3: Research Questions and Methods Overview

Questions	Methods
How do teachers and principals identify Culturally Responsive Teaching?	Interviews with teachers and principals. Culturally Responsive Teaching survey of teachers and principals.
How is culturally responsive teaching implemented in Alaskan middle schools?	Culturally Responsive Teaching survey of teachers and principals. Classroom Observations
How is culturally responsive teaching connected to student self-efficacy in Alaskan middle schools?	Classroom Observations Student Self-Efficacy Survey

1.9 Summary

There is a persistent achievement gap between Alaska Native and American Indian students and White students in Alaska. There is also a perception among educators that Culturally Responsive Teaching may positively address this gap, through effective teaching practices for minority students. By examining how teachers identify culturally responsive teaching, and the extent to which this practice is implemented in Alaskan Middle Schools, this study will inform the knowledge base for effective teaching. Lastly, this study will look specifically at the connections between culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy for middle school students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This review of literature focuses on a specific definition of culturally responsive teaching, defined as a teaching practice that employs the contextualizing of learning through the culturally diverse perspectives, beliefs and experiences of students. Specifically, the literature review will focus on three theoretical constructs, or approaches to culturally responsive teaching: (a) contextualized teaching and learning, (b) constructivist pedagogy, and (c) place and community-based education. The literature review will place this discussion in the specific historical context of public education in Alaska.

2.1 Historical Background

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 14.8% of the Alaskan population reported their race as Alaska Native or American Indian exclusively. Ninety-two percent of Alaskans 25 years of age or older graduated from high school and 27.7% earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Average household income was \$71,829 and 11.2% of the population was living under the poverty threshold, \$27,000 annual income for a family of four (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). There are 53 public school districts in Alaska, and Mt. Edgecumbe, a state-operated school, which is not considered a school district. The most recent population estimate for Alaska was 735,601 with 128,500 students in K-12 schools, based on average daily membership. Of these, 55,346 were school age children living in poverty (AK-EED, 2015b). Table 4 presents an overview of K-12 education in Alaska from the 2014/2015 school year (AK-EED, 2015b).

Table 4: Alaska Statewide Pre-K-12 Education Profile

Number of public school districts	53*	K-12 Student Population (Avg. Daily Membership	128,580
Regional Education Attendance Areas	19	Change in ADM from 13/14 to 14/15	.1%
City, Borough and Municipality Districts	34	School-Age Low Income Children	55, 346
		Number of High School Graduates (2015)	8,253
Public Schools Pre-Elem. to Grade 12	507	Number of Dropouts Grades 7-12 in 2015	2,141
State Operated Schools	1	School district square miles	685,175
Correspondence Schools	34	State Population (2014 estimate)	735,601

*Mt. Edgecumbe is a state-operated school and not considered a school district.

Note: This data is from the AK EED (2015)

This profile illustrates the geographic and logistical challenges for public education in Alaska. With 53 school districts and 507 schools dispersed over 685,175 square miles, even with digital communication systems, coordination and administration for Alaska's schools is challenging (AK-EED, 2015b).

The Pre-K-12 student population is also very diverse. In 2015, 24% of Alaska's students identified as Alaska Native or American Indian, 49% as White and 27% as Black, Hispanic or Asian Pacific Islander. Racial and ethnic diversity in Alaskan schools varies greatly from school to school, with large urban high schools representing as many as 60 different cultures and languages spoken in the home. Rural schools tend to be more homogenous with mostly indigenous populations, where K-12 school enrollments range from eight students with one teacher to 500 students with many teachers. The remaining 40% of Alaska Native students are in urban schools where the majority of the student enrollment is White. The majority of the residents in rural Alaska are Alaska Natives who live in villages with populations ranging between 25 and 5,000. In other words, there is no single, definitive context for Alaskan public education. Instead there are many diverse contexts across the vast geographic landscape of Alaska, equal to one-third the size of the rest of the United States (AK-EED, 2015b). This research examines culturally responsive teaching in both rural and urban contexts.

2.1.1 Historical timeline for Alaskan public education.

Until 1996, there were no published texts that focused solely on the history of education in Alaska. *Taken to Extremes: Education in the Far North* was the first published text that focused on the history of education in Alaska for indigenous students and students from immigrant families (Darnell & Hoëm, 1996). Unfortunately, much of the published work prior to this book either did not refer to Alaska Natives in education, or confused/misrepresented the Alaska population with American Indians and the context for education in the lower 48. However, there is an historical record of the significant legislation, events and court cases that impacted public education in Alaska over the last century. This context is a critical consideration for this research because it illustrates the complexity as well as the conflicts and challenges that have determined the current context of public education in Alaska.

2.1.2 The 1819 Civilization Fund Act.

Although this bill was enacted well in advance of Alaska becoming a territory, it nevertheless affected Alaska for decades. The funds devoted to this act were used by the federal

government to contract with religious groups to administer schools for American Indian children. This act extended federal authority over Native American and Alaska Native children's education beyond the more than 400 treaties in existence. This act came to be based on the belief that indigenous peoples' needs are best met through education that "civilizes" and promotes Christian beliefs. In retrospect, this act could have been referred to as the assimilation act, as this was the primary goal of the legislation. Although there have been other reform efforts and directives from the federal government that have influenced education in Alaska, Christianity has long been a driving force in the education of Alaska Natives (Barnhardt, 1980; Darnell & Hoëm, 1996; Dauenhauer, 2010).

2.1.3 The 1867 purchase of Alaska, also known as "Seward's Folly".

U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward signed a treaty with Russia for the purchase of Alaska for \$7 million, a bargain price of roughly two cents an acre. However, the Alaskan purchase was ridiculed in Congress and in the press as "Seward's Folly," and "Seward's Icebox." In these early pre-statehood days, the federal government interacted with Alaska Natives in terms of education in much the same way they administered education for American Indians. Although the programs and policies established by the federal government were driven by the needs of American Indians, the initial policies and programs continue to influence education in Alaska currently. This reluctance by the federal government to interact directly with Alaska Natives was in part due to the perception that Alaska Natives, unlike American Indians, did not have aboriginal title, or claims to Alaskan land. It was not until 1905 that the federal government separated Native and non-Native residents of the territory in terms of federal education services (Case & Voluck, 2012). During this period, the predominant method for educating Alaska Natives was through the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian-American company that operated schools in Kodiak, Southeast Alaska, and the Aleutians. Later, Alaskans were educated through boarding schools in the lower 48. The policy that resulted in the destructive process of sending American Indian and Alaska Native children to boarding schools also enacted the philosophy of assimilation through segregation. Separating youth from their families and communities, often at immense geographic distance forced the issue of assimilation on the boarding school subjects (Barnhardt, 2001). At the time of the purchase of Alaska, there was no centralized education system or authority in the territory.

2.1.4 The 1905 Nelson Act, legislation creating racially segregated schools in Alaska.

In 1885 Missionary-educator Sheldon Jackson was appointed as the administrator for education in Alaska. Under his direction and authority, the Interior Department contracted with missionary organizations to provide jurisdiction over education in the state. These organizations were connected in order to establish a network of village schools. These schools, supervised by missionaries, zealously approached the mission of civilization and the indoctrination of Christian beliefs. Many schools strictly forbid students from speaking their Native languages. The village council system of tribal government evolved from these early structures. Led by Sheldon Jackson, in 1905 Congress passed the Nelson Act, establishing a separate system of education for Alaska Natives, while simultaneously providing the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) nearly exclusive control over Alaska Native education. This administration continued for decades after statehood. The Nelson Act states: “CHAP. 277. An Act To provide for the construction and maintenance of roads, the establishment and maintenance of schools, and the care and support of insane persons in the district of Alaska, and for other purposes” (Alaskool, 2016). Basically, the result of the legislation was to racially segregate Alaska Native students from White and mixed-blood students for educational purposes. The act goes on to state:

SEC. 7. That the schools specified and provided for in this Act shall be devoted to the education of white children and children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life. The education of the Eskimos and Indians in the district of Alaska shall remain under the direction and control of the Secretary of the Interior, and schools for and among the Eskimos and Indians of Alaska shall be provided for by an annual appropriation, and the Eskimo and Indian children of Alaska shall have the same right to be admitted to any Indian boarding school as the Indian children in the States or Territories of the United States. (Alaskool, 2016, p. 1)

This blatant statement of institutional racism led to decades of discrimination and prejudice towards Alaska Native children in public schools. Although indigenous students in the lower 48 had been largely segregated from White students by the federal government for decades, ever since the establishment of treaties, much of the separation happened as a result of the reservation system. Since Alaska had no reservations, the effects of the Nelson Act were particularly devastating.

2.1.5 The 1928 Merriam Report.

This report, a survey of the social and economic conditions for Native Americans, was very critical of education systems across the country. The report's recommendations called for a major reformation of American Indian education with Indian involvement at all levels of the educational process and with specific recommendations that education be tied to communities, day schools extended, boarding schools reformed, Indian language and culture included in the development of the curriculum, and field services decentralized (Szasz, 1999).

The Merriam Report became a catalyst for John Collier, Sr. Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to enact major changes in Indian policy in the U.S. Several new programs were launched in order to encourage and support Indian self-determination in economic development, social services, and education. The Indian Reorganization Act and the Johnson-O'Malley Act, legislation enacted in 1934, had long term effects on United States Indian policy and a direct impact on Alaska Native people that continues today (Barnhardt, 2001). These acts reflected attempts towards acknowledging indigenous culture and schooling. At that time the BIA attempted to adopt a dual-purpose education system for Native Americans, including Alaska Natives, a system with hopes of preparing indigenous children to "walk in two worlds" (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). Collier said when taking office:

Indians whose culture, civic tradition, and inherited institutions are still strong and virile should be encouraged and helped to develop their life in their own patterns, not as segregated minorities but as noble elements in our common life. At the same time, the individual Indian is entitled to every opportunity that the nation offers to any citizen. This means that he is entitled to the fullest educational privileges, not in sequestered institutions but in the schools and colleges that serve us all. (Alaska Native Commission Final Report, 1994, p. 22)

The efforts towards a dual-purpose system waxed and waned according to the politics of Washington D.C., with conservative politicians in the post-World War II era, initiating a "back to the basics" movement that did not reflect the values of the Collier era.

2.1.6 The 1959 advent of Alaska statehood.

In the decades immediately following statehood, there was a period of intense federal activity. National organizations devoted to Native American issues were growing e.g., the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Native American Rights Fund (NARF).

More special interest groups were established, including the National Indian Education Association (NIEA), American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), and the National Indian School Boards Association (NISBA). Also more activist groups were founded, like the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Federal efforts such as the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in 1964 provided not only Head Start and Community Action Programs (e.g., RuralCAP); it also resulted in a system for collaboration between the federal government and Alaskan communities. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was the first act of legislation for groups of children beyond American Indians and Alaska Natives. It was designed to meet the special needs of children in low-income families, and it included special appropriations to public school districts enrolling American Indian and Alaska Native children (Barnhardt, 2001; Szasz, 1999).

2.1.7 The 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) to present day.

In 1971, Congress passed ANCSA. The Act has been called an extraordinary experiment in relations between the federal government and the indigenous peoples of Alaska. This act was the culmination of years of work by Alaska Native people to ensure the future economic stability of their people. ANCSA, P.L. 92-203, was signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon on December 18, 1971, and is the largest land claims settlement in U.S. history. The compelling purpose for the federal government to engage in these negotiations that resulted in the act was the desire to drill for oil at Prudhoe Bay. The settlement resolved the issues around the land claims of Alaska Natives by transferring government-held titles of Alaska land to 12 Alaska Native regional corporations and more than 200 village corporations. A 13th regional corporation, without land, was eventually created for Alaska Natives who no longer lived in Alaska. More than 44 million acres of land in Alaska, including the surface and subsurface rights were transferred to these 12 corporations and more than 200 village corporations, fundamentally changing the legal relationship of Alaska Native people to their land. Before ANCSA, Alaska Native peoples co-owned Alaska's land with the Federal government. After ANCSA, Alaska Native people became shareholders of their regional corporation so that land ownership was based on the corporate model. This act had wide ranging effects on all aspects of life for Alaskans. In terms of education, the act quickly led to systemic changes, including the Molly Hootch case (Summit, 1997). ANCSA is still very controversial today, because it forced Alaska

Natives into a corporate system of governing. Although, communities have been able to establish and maintain tribal governance, and in some instances tribal sovereignty, the clash in cultures is still playing out in board rooms, elections and village councils throughout the state.

One of the most impactful court cases for Alaskan Education was the “Molly Hootch Case”. Prior to the Molly Hootch case, Alaska Native students only went to school in their home villages until the 8th grade (Barnhardt, 1979). In order to continue their education, rural Alaskans were required to either move to boarding schools or move into to a city with a public high school. Both of these difficult choices resulted in high dropout rates for Alaska Natives as well as a loss of cultural identity as students were forced to assimilate, while at the same time villages mourned the exodus of the young people.

Students who left their villages to attend high schools in Alaskan urban areas experienced a dropout rate of 65% by the sophomore year (Barnhardt, 1979). There were many factors that caused this high dropout rate including homesickness, lack of academic preparation from the BIA elementary schools, and prejudice against Alaskan Native students. In the boarding schools students reported incidents of racism, abuse, and the forced denial of their culture. The State of Alaska recognized the failure of these educational options and built regional high schools in hub communities beginning in 1966. These boarding schools were not to be located in existing villages because the state’s educational consultants, Training Corporation of America, had erroneously concluded that living in urban areas appears to accelerate the breakdown of old village patterns, patterns which “may retard the development of rural folk into a disciplined and reliable workforce” (“State of Alaska regional secondary school system: Implementation plan, final report,” 1967). In addition to high dropout rates, the regional high schools also saw a high incidence of drinking, vandalism, violence, and suicide attempt (Cotton, 1984).

In order to address this inequity and injustice, a lawsuit was filed on behalf of 27 Alaska Native students. The case was officially named *Tobeluk v. Lind* but has been called the Molly Hootch case for the plaintiff first listed. Molly Hootch was a student from Emmonak, who along with the other plaintiffs from many other Alaskan villages sued the State of Alaska for failing to provide village high schools. The Alaska Supreme Court decided in favor of the Alaska Native students. Since this decision in 1974, high schools have been built in most Alaskan villages. Although the high schools in rural villages are proving to be more effective than the boarding schools, with lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and collaboration with local

communities, the academic achievement rates for the rural schools is still well below the national average (Olthuis, 2016).

In 1979, the Center for Cross Cultural Studies at the University of Alaska Fairbanks conducted the Small High School Programs for Rural Alaska study. Among more than 100 recommendations for the Alaska State Dept. of Education, school districts, school boards, superintendents and teachers, were several recommendations that called for programs that truly prepared students to “walk in two worlds.” These recommendations, arising from the Molly Hootch case and the initial experiment with rural schools can be considered as an early call for culturally responsive teaching:

1. Teachers should utilize the local community as an educational resource to the maximum extent possible and they should involve local people (including itinerant personnel) in learning activities. Students should be engaged in experientially-oriented, project-centered activities, with the teacher serving as an active participant in a two-way learning process, so that the teacher can learn about and be responsive to the community's perspective at the same time the students are learning the school's perspective.

2. Teachers should seek to become aware of the functioning of the school as a social system, and foster the development of personalized relationships with and amongst students to help establish a strong sense of community and common commitment to cooperative learning endeavors. Conversely, teachers should attempt to avoid pre-structured, mechanistic, individualistic approaches that tend to set the students apart to perform individualized tasks without the benefit of interaction and negotiation regarding the nature of the learning activity. The most important task of the teacher is to establish a social community with the students (Barnhardt, 1979, p. 16).

With a few exceptions, some of which are schools that are research sites in this study, these recommendations are as valid and pertinent to Alaska rural high schools as they were almost four decades ago.

The achievement gap for minority students in the United States is becoming more pronounced as the disparity between income levels becomes more pronounced (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). In the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has had a disproportionately negative impact on indigenous students. As reported by the Harvard Civil Rights Project, the legislation has resulted in problems for the American Indian, Alaska Native

and Native Hawai‘ian schools in terms of: (a) unrealistic standards; (b) unfair expectations; (c) disproportionately negative impacts on high-poverty schools; (d) emphasis on a narrow set of outcomes; and (e) the use of theories of education reform that do not work in practice (McCarty, 2009). Because of the negative consequences for schools and districts that did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), many school systems felt pressure to “teach to the test”.

In 2005 and 2007 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) conducted the National Indian Education Study (NIES) for the U.S. Dept. of Education. NIES is the only nationally representative assessment of American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) student performance (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). The results for reading/language arts showed that over the two-year span, 2005 to 2007, mean reading scores for AI/AN did not change significantly and in some cases declined, while the performance of non-AI/AN students increased. Similar results were reported for the NAEP test for mathematics (DeVoe & Darling-Churchill, 2008). This data suggests that the primary goal of the legislation, to narrow the achievement gap, was not achieved for AI/AN students since the implementation of NCLB (McCarty, 2009). The assumptions behind the consequences that are built into NCLB for failing schools are built around large school districts and population centers where families have choices about where students attend school. In every measure, including the construct of AYP, there is a distinct and prevalent bias against small rural schools.

This bias, called ‘placism’, discriminates against people based on where they live. This rural incompatibility is evident in NCLB’s accountability provisions, sanctions, and highly qualified teacher provisions. Problems in these areas are the result of ignoring, or distorting, the realities of rural schooling. The accountability provisions are constructed so that small schools will frequently be incorrectly labeled as failing. The sanctions, inappropriate for rural areas, fail to provide solutions to existing rural challenges. (Jimerson, 2005, p. 211)

Jimerson goes on to point out that one of the unintended consequences of NCLB and the construct of “highly qualified teacher” status, is the effect on hiring teachers for rural schools already faced with a teacher shortage. Working with Alaska Senator Ted Stevens, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development managed to receive a waiver, so that small schools with a limited number of teachers could be exempt from the highly qualified teacher requirements as part of NCLB. The NIES data also suggest that the emphasis on high-stakes and

the structure of consequences for schools may curtail or eliminate Native language and culture instruction.

The National Center for Education Statistics published a study conducted in 2005 that involved 5,100 students, 1,300 teachers, and 470 principals in 550 schools serving indigenous students (Freeman & Fox, 2005) . The focus of the study was a survey regarding curriculum and instruction. The study asked about the extent to which AI/AN culture and language were integrated into regular classroom instruction. In grade four, 21% of students were assigned to teachers who reported daily or regular use of an AI/AN perspective in instruction. The highest percentage of these teachers worked in high-density schools (predominately indigenous). Sixteen percent of eighth-grade reading students had teachers who reported regular use of an AI/AN perspective, and 10% of eighth-grade mathematics students reported the same. Of all students queried, only 4% reported they were learning how to speak and read their heritage language, and all of these were at high-density schools (Freeman & Fox, 2005).

In general, the effect of NCLB in Alaska was similar to that in other states, and other accountability efforts. School districts shifted instruction, professional development, curriculum and assessment in order to meet the accountability measures required for NCLB. Not only did this movement diminish the teaching profession in the eyes of the public, it also shifted instruction away from community and place-based curriculum, from culturally responsive instruction towards decontextualized, low-level basic skills instruction. In the big picture, the end of NCLB and the beginning of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), presents immense opportunities and challenges for states (AK-EED, 2017). On one hand, the shift in responsibility and accountability from the federal government to state governments suggests that states will be able to develop assessment systems that are more aligned with the unique educational contexts of each state. The USDOE website for the Every Student Succeeds Act states that NCLB required “Student Performance Targets and School Ratings” that were “unrealistic and set by federal government based on tests alone” (2016). The site also states that under ESSA and policies from the Obama administration, performance targets and ratings will be “State driven and based on multiple measures,” implying that student performance will be measured by something other than standardized tests. Secondly, USDOE states that under NCLB, Accountability, Interventions and Supports for Struggling Schools were “one-size fits all federal identification and intervention.” USDOE also states that under ESSA accountability and interventions will be

“state developed identification and intervention with support for the bottom 5% of schools where subgroups are falling behind, and high schools with high dropout rates, including funding for lowest-performing schools” (2016).

The other area that represents significant change from NCLB is that ESSA removes highly qualified requirements for teachers and does not require student achievement data as part of educator evaluations. The goal for the ESSA plan in Alaska is to make progress towards our state education mission, as stated in Alaska Statute 14.03.015:

The purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them (AK-EED, 2015a).

There is an opportunity for states to develop accountability and assessment systems, as well as intervention and support initiatives that are appropriate and effective, and aligned with the instructional contexts of the states. That is the purpose of ESSA – to move power and authority from the federal government to the states. However, many educators are skeptical that state governments and departments of education are prepared to make positive changes. With the context of a new administration at the federal level, there are many unknowns regarding the future of ESSA in Alaska.

The history of education in Alaska has been tumultuous (missionaries), contentious (NCLB), and at times catastrophic (boarding schools) for Alaska Native students. NCLB did impact curriculum and instruction to some degree as federal mandates reached even the most remote rural schools. Despite all of these reform efforts, some educators are optimistic that Alaskans will return to their roots to teach in culturally responsive ways. Culturally responsive teaching moves beyond strategies and programs towards a "humanizing pedagogy that respects and uses the reality, history, and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice" (Bartolomé, 1994, p. 173). Looking across this tumultuous historical and political context, consider the words of Ronalda Caliente-Nelson during an interview about culture and education:

We can't go back 100 years... Sure, ideally, it would be better to learn about our culture through our language, which is a very respectful and gentle language. Traditionally, young people learned through the teachings of their uncles. We have to think about what

we can do within the systems and the worlds that students live in today. We also have to be very serious about academic expectations. Cultural curriculum can be a different pathway to academic rigor, one within gentle, yet high expectations for all students (Cadiente-Nelson, 2015).

Despite all of the state and federal programs, legislation, grant initiatives, curriculum and assessment systems/programs, there is still a sense that Alaskan educators have the autonomy to adapt curriculum and pedagogy in ways that are appropriate for the students they teach, to contextualize learning in local contexts. This research will examine both the extent to which teachers and schools have autonomy in these areas, and the choices that they make within that context. There is general agreement that ESSA brings more autonomy for the state; this study will take one step towards understanding the degree to which that is true, and how schools and teachers use that autonomy.

2.2 Theoretical Background

Although research on Alaskan public education has been somewhat limited as a specific context, research conducted by Judith Kleinfeld continues to inform understanding of effective teaching in cross-cultural contexts in Alaska (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1991). In “Effective Teachers of Eskimo and Indian Students,” Kleinfeld dismisses the myth of the “ethnocentric teacher who strives to propel his students into the American mainstream by destroying their cultural identity” (Kleinfeld, 1972, p. 301). She identifies key practices, such as personal warmth and categorizes rural teachers as “traditionalists, warm defenders, sophisticates and sentimentalists” (p. 309). Considering the timing of this research (just before the rural Alaskan high schools were opened) the research presents an important view of effective teaching, which transcends cultural difference as the key indicator.

Kleinfeld continued to research teaching in rural Alaskan schools for more than two decades. Further research suggested the critical importance of examining pre-service teacher beliefs about culture prior to entering rural classrooms (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1991). Kleinfeld’s research, which was controversial at times, established the complexity of the instructional/cultural context in Alaskan rural schools and resisted movements and attempts to break down the challenges of effective cross-cultural teaching into simple dichotomies. Although this work will inform the study of culturally responsive teaching, this research preceded much of the research and theoretical exploration of the culturally responsive teaching

movement. The history of education in Alaska has been tumultuous and rife with conflict. The complex history of education in Alaska, which includes colonization and the marginalization of indigenous peoples has resulted in the current context of hostility and tensions within the public school system (Barnhardt, 2001; Dauenhauer, 2010).

Alaska has been at the forefront of the development of culturally responsive teaching theory and practice with the exploration and integration of indigenous knowledge systems and native ways of knowing. In 1998, Oscar Kawagley and Ray Barnhardt published “Western Science Meets Native Reality”. This article has become a foundational text for the consideration of contextualized learning and the teaching of science in Alaskan classrooms. The authors argue that learning should be based on a student's “everyday life” in the community where they live. “The Native student will become more motivated to learn when the subject matter is based on something useful and suitable to the livelihood of the community and is presented in a way that reflects the interconnectedness of all things” (Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998, p. 3). Kawagley’s next collaborative work, representing more than a decade of ethnographic research became: “A Yupiak Worldview: A Pathway to Ecology and Spirit” (2006). This text also represents a significant departure from historical research and theory regarding culturally responsive teaching. In this book, Kawagley argues that culture is not a subject area, or a topic, or something that can be reduced to arts and crafts activities. Here, Kawagley argues the importance of contextualized learning according to the students’ worldview and experience:

When they (Alaskan students) can learn about others through their own worldview, learning and tedium are no longer synonymous. Not only will students’ attitudes improve, but also the family will come closer together and improve their interpersonal relationships. This is a multidisciplinary, multisensory, holistic, and potentially exciting approach to education— schoolwork connected to the work and play of the community. (p. 98)

Although the historical research conducted in Alaska is critical to the research proposed, there has been significant work in this area nationally and internationally. In the field of culturally responsive teaching and contextualized learning, one of the most influential texts is the seminal work of Geneva Gay: “Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research and Practice” (2010).

Historically, the prevailing view of multicultural education was framed by social scientists Benjamin Bloom, Allison Davis, Susan Silverman, and Robert Hess who espoused the

cultural deprivation model, that posited the limited cultural capital in low-income households and communities as the driving factor in low academic achievement (Bloom, Davis, Hess, & Silverman, 1965). Shifting from the deficit model to a paradigm that focuses on cultural difference instead of deficit, Gay writes: “Culturally responsive teaching is a means for unleashing the higher learning potentials of ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their academic and psychosocial abilities” (2010, p. 21).

Scholars, researchers, and educators have speculated and examined approaches to assist teachers in teaching about diversity as well as interacting with the diverse students in schools today while effectively working towards academic achievement. One area that has developed in multicultural education literature is culturally relevant pedagogy. For this research we are referring to Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) in the same light. CRT maintains that teachers need to be non-judgmental and understanding of the cultural backgrounds of their students in order to be effective. For more than three decades, scholars have written extensively on the role that the intersection between school and community, the “everyday lives” that Kawagley referred to, should play in the planning and delivery of effective instruction (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2002, 2010; Kawagley & Barnhardt, 1998; Kleinfeld, 1972; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2001; Nieto, 2010; Villegas, 1991).

2.2.1 Contextualized and place-based learning.

Culturally responsive pedagogy has become a catchall phrase for multicultural education. For this research, culturally responsive teaching can be considered as teaching practices that address students’ specific cultural characteristics. The term *cultural characteristics* includes commonly thought of concepts such as values, traditions, and language, but also extends to include concepts such as communication, learning styles, and relationship norms (Gay, 2002).

This theory is realized in practical terms when teachers recognize the internal structure of ethnic learning styles, which include at least eight key strategies or considerations for teaching: (a) preferred content; (b) ways of working through learning tasks; (c) techniques for organizing and conveying ideas and thoughts; (d) physical and social settings for task performance; (e) structural arrangements of work, study, and performance space; (f) perceptual stimulation for receiving, processing, and demonstrating comprehension and competence; (g) motivations, incentives, and rewards for learning; and (h) interpersonal interactional styles (Gay, 2010).

In practical terms, culturally responsive teaching consists of teaching and learning that is contextualized. Research into cognition, as it manifests in everyday activity, suggests that knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). The contexts of students' lives and their family situations and backgrounds in tandem with the communities and larger places in which they live and go to school form the foundation on which learning will occur (McIntyre, Resberry, & Gonzalez, 2001). These authors argue that: "Instruction always takes place within a context. The challenge for teachers is to find ways to contextualize, or 'ground' academic learning with students' experiences, their lives outside of school" (p. 121).

Making these connections between academic learning and students' experience and culture is the nexus of culturally responsive teaching, which occurs when learning is cognitively situated and contextualized. Effective teachers must first develop awareness about each student's foundations outside of school. The lives of students reflect their own individualized approaches to the world, the worldviews of their families and those they live with, the situated experiences of the communities in which they live, and the larger environments or places in which their communities and schools are located (Gruenewald & Smith, 2014). Too often, particularly for middle school and secondary students, these aspects of students' lives have been separate from the school experience, which often focuses on decontextualized content. Schools too often use textbooks consisting of isolated facts and trivia, as well as numerous multiple-choice tests that do not prepare students to be educated citizens (Delpit, 2006). Contextual information directly impacts the extent to which students can or cannot make connections to school-based subject matter and extend their academic understanding (E. B. Johnson, 2002). Johnson describes the relationship between the functioning of the human brain and the need for contextualized teaching as requiring students to act in ways that are "natural to human beings."

That is, it conforms to the brain's functions, to basic human psychology, and to three principles that modern biology and physics have discovered permeating the entire universe. These principles – interdependence, differentiation, and self-organization – infuse everything that lives, including human beings When the brain manages to connect new details with familiar experiences, it keeps them. When it cannot weave new details into familiar patterns, it expels them. (p. 22)

Johnson continues to explain the direct link between connecting learning to students' situated lives and powerful learning experiences. He asserts that when students make connections to their individual, social, and cultural experiences outside of school, (their daily lives), they find meaning and retain what they learn. When academic content is not contextualized in meaningful ways, students don't retain the information, or concepts that they learn (p. 23). Johnson's notion of contextualized learning contributes to the theoretical construct of constructivist learning. Constructivism, also known as a student centered versus teacher centered approach has emerged as one of the greatest influences on the practice of education in the last 25 years (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Teacher preparation programs as well as accrediting bodies have embraced the notion that students construct meaning by employing prior learning and their personal context in the learning process. Teachers have embraced constructivist-based pedagogy with a fervor that is unusual during this period of accountability and increased pressures for standardized testing and "quick fixes" (Powell, Cohen, & Farrar, 1985). For many teachers, the focus on constructing meaning in the teaching-learning process resonates with prior beliefs because constructivist-based instruction firmly places educational priorities on students' learning. At its core, constructivist theory suggests that students have to construct their own knowledge, to make meaning according to their own "tool kit" of concepts and skills. The challenge for teachers and schools is to provide a supportive community and environment; to provide the setting and the challenges that will compel students to construct meaning through the work of the classroom (Davis, 1990).

Constructivist pedagogy moves beyond behaviorist approaches in that it recognizes that learning is a recursive process. Specifically, effective teachers structure learning according to students' cognitive processes and the pedagogy should be determined by the instructional context. In other words, constructivist pedagogy looks different across classrooms. However, one example of a constructivist approach typifies a structured process for learning. Authors Baviskar, Hartle, and Whitney suggest criteria for constructivist approaches to learning are: (a) eliciting prior knowledge, (b) creating cognitive dissonance, (c) application of new knowledge with feedback, and (d) reflection on learning (2009).

Recent research in neuroscience supports constructivist approaches to teaching and learning because it recognizes the importance of context in developing long term memory and

recall. Cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner argues that there is a close tie between actively participating in culture as well as learning, remembering, talking, and imaging. It is through these actions that we create our world and form perceptions of our identity (Bruner, 1996). Culturally responsive teachers build bridges and “ties” between culture, students’ worldviews and perceptions, identity, and academic content.

An important aspect of constructivist and contextualized teaching and learning is place-based education. The Rural School and Community Trust, an organization that came into existence as a result of the Annenberg Rural Challenge initiative, provides a rationale and impetus for this important work. Place-based education is learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place. The community provides the context for learning, student work focuses on community needs and interest, and community members serve as resources and partners in every aspect of teaching and learning (Johnson & Strange, 2005).

Despite the common sense nature of approaches like using the local history, environment, and culture as the core content for interdisciplinary study across grade levels, curriculum and instruction in Alaskan schools is often decontextualized and separate from the local context. Although many educators would argue in favor of contextualized and constructivist approaches to education, many do not see the connection between these theories and place-based education. There is a growing body of research and documentation related to place-based education, including Smith and Sobel, who make a comprehensive argument that the approach is needed in order to: (a) engage students by connecting education with their direct experience of the world, (b) enhance the long-term viability of democratic institutions by incorporating civic engagement into educational practices, (c) encourage an ethic of environmental stewardship and sustainability, and (d) promote local communities and places as a tangible point of departure for addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges of the future (2010). Professional organizations (e.g., the Alaska Science Consortium and the Alaska Council for the Social Studies) continue to advocate for place-based education in Alaska.

2.2.2 Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy.

Rosen, Glennie, Dalton, Lesson and Bozick (2010) examined 27 studies that implemented measures of self-efficacy, and they found that students’ self-efficacy had an impact on their academic achievement. This study also examines the connections between culturally

responsive teaching and student self-efficacy. The assumption is that when students engage in contextualized learning, which incorporates their culture, experience, language, and learning styles, it will impact their academic self-concept and self-efficacy (Rosen et al., 2010).

The construct of self-efficacy derives from Bandura's larger theoretical framework of social cognitive theory regarding human motivation and action. This theory suggests that human functioning arises from interactions among three primary factors: (a) personal factors (e.g. cognitions, emotions), (b) behavioral factors, and (c) environmental or situational conditions (1986). Bandura's social learning theory stresses the importance of observational learning, imitation and modeling. His theory weaves together continuous interactions between behaviors, personal factors and the environment referred to as the "reciprocal causation model" (Bandura, 1989).

However, Bandura does not suggest that the three factors in this model make equal contributions to behavior. The influence of these factors is contextually dependent on which factor is strongest at any particular moment. Self-efficacy, a key factor in social cognition, particularly for adolescents, influences human behavior and the environments with which one interacts, and likewise influences one's actions and conditions within the environment (Pajares & Urdan, 2006). Self-efficacy can be in various states of flux for adolescents, as these perceptions and beliefs guide the development of children towards adulthood.

2.2.3 Self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem in adolescents.

It is important to draw clear distinctions between self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem in adolescents. Although all three perceptions and belief systems contribute to identity, agency, and success in school and in life, for this research self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment. These "self-efficacy beliefs" guide people in the choices they make, the effort they put forth towards within a specific performance domain, and the level of anxiety or serenity they experience as they engage in those tasks (Usher & Pajares, 2008). Self-efficacy has been shown as a predictor of students' academic achievement across academic areas and levels (Pajares & Urdan, 2006).

In general, self-concept (also referred to as self-identity, self-perspective, or self-structure) can be described as comprising of beliefs about personal identity (Bandura, 1989).

When people refer to their self-concept they often refer to elements of their personal identity including for example gender roles, sexuality, racial identity, and social/political belief systems. Self-concept tends to answer the question “Who am I?” (Kanagawa, Cross, & Markus, 2001) and it is a cognitive or descriptive component of one’s self. Temporal self-appraisal theory suggests that people tend to maintain a positive self-evaluation by distancing themselves from their negative self-traits and paying more attention to the positive (Wilson & Ross, 2001). This sorting process has been shown to occur particularly in a dynamic state during adolescence as hyper peer-conscious young people continually evaluate their abilities, interests, and beliefs in order to determine a self-concept. In other words, the self-concept defines an individual’s perception of himself or herself. The construct of self-concept is an important consideration in terms of behavior and motivation (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976).

Self-concept is very much in a state of flux during adolescence. Human adolescence begins at puberty and ends with a stable construction of an adult role. As such, adolescence has both biological and psychosocial demarcations (Van Hasselt & Hersen, 1987). There are several key antecedents to self-concept (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). These include (a) frames of reference: (social comparison is a critical source of potent information for self-concept) (Marsh, 1990) (b) causal attributions: the factors to which people attribute their successes and failures are hypothesized to influence their self-concept (Tennen & Herzberger, 1987) and (c) reflected appraisals from significant others. Researchers have suggested that people come to view themselves as they believe how others view them (Sullivan, 2012), and finally, (d) mastery experiences: self-schemas are created from an individual’s past experiences in a particular domain. Relevant information and experiences are subsequently processed by these self-schemas (Markus, 1977). During adolescence these antecedents to self-concept can shift dramatically over time through interaction with peers, family, social settings and other events.

Although self-efficacy can contribute to self-concept, and both predict emotion, motivation, and performance to varying degrees, there are key differences between these constructs. The two constructs are not mutually exclusive, yet there are clear differences. For example, in the context of academia, a working definition of Academic Self-Concept would include knowledge and perceptions about oneself in achievement situations. The central element would be the perceived competence of the student in the academic setting. Academic self-efficacy on the other hand differs from Self-concept in that it is determined by the student’s

convictions for successfully performing the academic tasks. A central element for self-efficacy would be the perceived confidence that the student has in completing the task (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003).

The common perception of self-esteem is the extent to which one prizes, values, approves or likes oneself (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 2013). In social psychology self-esteem is a measured construct that is quantified as the sum of evaluations across distinct attributes of one's self or personality. *Self-esteem* is the total affective evaluation of a person's worth, value, or importance. Often referred to as self-worth, self-regard, self-respect, and self-acceptance, the development of self-esteem is critical to an adolescent's passage to adulthood. Self-esteem is considered to be the evaluative component of a person's representation or understanding of self, with self-concept being a more inclusive construct. Therefore, thoughts and perceptions about the self (as part of the self-concept) may or may not influence self-esteem. For instance, believing that one is a great writer may be a part of one's self-concept, but may not bear any relation to one's self-esteem. However, if one feels depressed or discouraged because of beliefs that he or she is not a great writer, that is a matter of self-esteem (Robinson et al., 2013).

Depression, behavioral distress, and suicide have been tied to low self-esteem in adolescents (Cohen, Reinherz, & Frost, 1994; Kazdin, French, Unis, Esveltd-Dawson, & Sherick, 1983). The relationship between low self-esteem and poor academic achievement is well established (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). In the study by Rosenberg et al., the findings show that although global self-esteem is strongly related to psychological well-being, specific academic self-esteem is a better predictor of school performance. The study also demonstrates that the degree to which specific academic self-esteem affects global self-esteem, particularly regarding positive elements of self-esteem, is a function of how highly academic performance is valued by the individual (1995). Although self-concept and self-esteem contribute to academic achievement in both positive and negative ways, the relationship between self-efficacy and student achievement is clearly aligned (Pajares & Urdan, 2006; Zhang, Zhao, & Yu, 2009)

Although self-efficacy, self-concept and self-esteem are not mutually exclusive, each construct attends to its own attributes and criteria. An example of an attribute of self-efficacy would be: "I can always manage to solve difficult problems". For self-concept, an attribute would be: "I never feel down in the dumps for very long". And lastly, an attribute for self-

esteem would be: “On the whole I’m satisfied with myself”. In this study, for adolescents in Alaskan middle schools, the focus is on self-efficacy, a key determinant in academic achievement.

2.2.4 Factors that lead to self-efficacy.

As a performance-based measure of self-perceptions of capability, self-efficacy is fundamentally different from other motivational constructs like outcome expectations, self-concept, self-esteem, and locus of control. In order to understand the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement, it is critical to unpack the factors that lead to self-efficacy, and hence the effects of self-efficacy on cognitive development and functioning. Bandura (1993) asserts that “the mind as a computational program” was the preeminent driving conceptual model for research on how people process information. However, this conceptual framework neglected self-regulatory processes that are key to human development and learning. Particularly in the context of academic achievement and learning, it is important to understand the factors that lead to self-efficacy. Individuals influence and determine their own functioning through the processes of agency, or their beliefs and concepts about their ability to control their lives. Efficacy beliefs determine how people perceive, feel, and guide their behavior.

2.2.5 Cognitive factors.

Since human behavior is purposeful it is also self-regulated through personal goal setting that is closely related to a self-appraisal of abilities related to the performance. Strong perceptions of self-efficacy drive higher, more challenging goal setting (Bandura & Jourden, 1991). Likewise, the stronger the self-efficacy through self-appraisal, the higher the individual’s commitment will be towards the performance (commitment and perseverance), (Lent, Brown, & Larkin, 1986). Those with high self-efficacy anticipate success scenarios, while those who doubt their success (low self-efficacy) anticipate failure scenarios. The independent effect of perceived self-efficacy on cognitive performance, as well as the self-regulative processes that influence performance, have been documented (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990).

Cognitive factors influence positive and negative performance. There are different reasons behind poor performance. An individual might perform poorly because they lack the skills to conduct the performance at an adequate level, or because they lack the sense of efficacy to use their skills effectively. Cognitive factors like persistence also play a key role in self-efficacy; “It requires a strong sense of efficacy to remain task oriented in the face of pressing

situational demands and failures that have social repercussions” (Bandura, 1993, p 120).

Another cognitive factor relates to an individual’s perception of ability or capacity to perform a task. There are two predominant views in terms of an individual’s ability to perform a task. The “inherent capacity view” results in diminished self-efficacy as one encounters problems or challenges as they perform a task. This cognitive process results in lower confidence and aspirations (Bandura, 1997). Other cognitive factors include: (a) social comparisons related to accurate feedback, (b) observing “progressive mastery,” (c) environments that develop ability as an acquirable skill (versus inherent capacity), (d) perceptions of control, and (e) the relationship between performance and tangible goal setting. The cognitive factors regarding self-efficacy could also be referred to as the thinking context that surrounds participation in a task. How a person perceives their ability to perform a task, whether that perception is positive or negative, influences their actual ability to perform the task. For instance, if a student were asked to perform a written task during a pre-determined time sequence, and if the student does not feel as though she is capable of performing the task in the allotted time, the diminished self-efficacy would become a challenge or barrier to completing the task. This perception could be based on a prior experience, or self-doubt related to other academic experiences. The student’s “thinking context” or metacognition, and self-regulation related to the task at hand is a significant cognitive factor related to capacity and self-efficacy.

2.2.6 Motivational factors.

Beliefs regarding efficacy play a critical role in the self-regulation of motivation. Motivation occurs through forward thinking and anticipation. People form beliefs about what they can do, what they can do well and what they can’t do (Weiner, 1974). They set goals according to these beliefs. There are three prominent theories regarding motivation: attribution theory, expectancy-value theory, and goal theory (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Attribution theory grapples with how people interpret information to form a causal judgment. This theory began with the foundational work of Fritz Heider who studied the relationship between attributions and behavior (Heider, 1944).

Expectancy-value theory argues that behavior is a function of the interaction between a person's expectancies about the outcomes of actions and the value they place on those outcomes (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). For example, a person might avoid drinking coffee in the afternoon because they believe it will help them sleep at night. The predictiveness of this

theory is enhanced with a self-efficacy determinant (Vries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 1988). Lastly, goal theory refers to the effects of setting goals on subsequent performance. Researcher Edwin Locke found that individuals who set specific, difficult goals performed better than those who set general, easy goals (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Self-efficacy beliefs influence motivation in multiple ways: (a) determining the goals that one sets, (b) the level of effort and focus one puts forth, (c) how long they persevere towards the goal (overcoming challenges), and (d) resilience to failure. Those who have strong, consistent beliefs in their ability and capacity put forth greater effort to meet their goals (Bandura, 1993).

2.2.7 Affective factors.

Emotions such as trust, fear, and anxiety all play a role in determining efficacy and the ability to accomplish a goal. The stronger an individual's sense of self-efficacy, the more likely people are to take risks and act boldly (Bandura & Dweck, 1985). In an academic setting, students' beliefs in their ability to perform a task or to master academic subjects predict their subsequent achievement. Students' level of scholastic anxiety has little or no impact on academic performance.

Student achievement also impacts the efficacy of teachers. Teachers who work with non-achieving or disruptive students are often stressed, which leads to a weak commitment and less time on academic instruction, a self-fulfilling prophecy in terms of student achievement. Teachers who report significantly high coping efficacy manage academic stressors and challenges by directing their energies at solving problems. Teachers who distrust their efficacy turn their effort inward to relieve their emotional distress, which only aggravates the situation (Chwalisz, Altmaier, & Russell, 1992).

2.2.8 Self-efficacy and academic achievement.

At no time in a person's life is the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement more pronounced than during the middle school years. Although many of the cognitive, motivational, and affective factors that influence self-efficacy and hence achievement have been in place since childhood, it is during adolescence when students develop their academic selves. Bandura (1993) describes three different belief systems that influence academic development: (a) Students' beliefs in their efficacy to manage their own learning; (b) The relationship between the student's level of motivation, and academic accomplishments; and (c)

The teachers' beliefs in their personal efficacy to promote learning and a positive learning environment. Faculty beliefs in their collective instructional efficacy contribute significantly to their schools' level of academic achievement. Student body characteristics influence school-level achievement more strongly by altering faculty beliefs in their collective efficacy than through direct effects on school achievement.

According to Zimmerman, “During the past two decades, self-efficacy has emerged as a highly effective predictor of students’ motivation and learning” (2000 p. 89). In a study to measure self-efficacy in terms of perceived capability to perform various reading and writing activities, outcome expectancies were assessed regarding the value of these activities in attaining various outcomes in employment, social pursuits, family life, education, and citizenship. Outcome expectancies and efficacy beliefs jointly predicted 32% of the variance in reading achievement. In terms of writing achievement, self-efficacy was the only significant predictor. These findings support Bandura’s notion that self-efficacy is a critical determining factor in motivation (Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989).

In a meta-analytic review of 68 studies, Multon, Brown, and Lent (1991) found positive and statistically significant relationships between self-efficacy beliefs and academic performance and persistence outcomes across a wide variety of subjects, experimental designs, and assessment methods. The findings from this study suggest that self-efficacy beliefs are linked to academic behaviors in ways that support Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy. The relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement is further demonstrated as Zimmerman (2000) argues that “efficacious students were better at monitoring their working time, more persistent, less likely to reject correct hypotheses prematurely and better at solving conceptual problems than inefficacious students of equal ability” (p. 87). Through a survey of research related to self-efficacy and academic achievement, Bong and Skaalvik (2003) report that self-efficacy beliefs relate strongly to (a) task choice, (b) career selection, (c) persistence and performance, (d) grade goals and academic aspirations, (e) cognitive strategy use and self-regulation, (f) perceived value, (g) mastery goal orientation, and (h) intrinsic interest and self-satisfaction.

Carol Dweck writes: “Praise should deal, not with the child’s personality attributes, but with his efforts and achievements” (Dweck, 2006, p. 163). This quote reflects the relatively new movement in public education that values perseverance and grit, and acknowledges that the

constructs of self-esteem and self-efficacy arise from a variety of factors: cognitive, affective and motivational.

The growth mindset suggests that learning should be viewed as a complex iterative recursive process, where students bring to bear their toolsets of attitudes, cognitive, motivational, and affective factors to solve and complete the undertaking at hand. Learning is not a transactional process where a performance takes place and it is judged to be acceptable or not. Although intelligence is a cultural construct dependent on the belief and value system that guides our perceptions of success, when it comes to public education and working with middle school students in particular, there is now extensive research to support the notion that self-efficacy plays an immense role in academic achievement (Bandura, 1986; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Shell et al., 1989).

In addition Hammond makes the argument that since the central concern for many teachers working with minority students is basic skills and/or “teaching to the test”, students become dependent learners, without the cognitive demands for higher order thinking and problem solving offered to students who are regarded as high achieving (2014). There are echoes of Bandura’s work in this book as Hammond argues that teachers engage in the self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations. Students without sufficient self-efficacy to persevere through academic tasks, often engage in learning environments that lead to teacher burnout and low expectations. This notion, that self-efficacy is a critical component or foundation to learning for all students, but particularly for students who have not been successful in public schools, is a critical perspective for this research.

Culture as it turns out, is the way that every brain makes sense of the world. That is why everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, has a culture. Think of culture as software for the brain’s hardware. The brain uses cultural information to turn everyday happenings into meaningful events. If we want to help dependent learners do more higher order thinking and problem solving, then we have to access their brain’s cognitive structures to deliver culturally responsive instruction. (Hammond, 2014, p.22)

In other words, when we fully engage students as humans, in culturally responsive ways, where learning is contextualized through the lives of our students, they will develop self-efficacy organically, through real, tangible academic outcomes.

2.2.9 Why examine self-efficacy?

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) engages the student as a human being in a caring, nurturing, purposeful effort towards the development of academic, social, and personal growth. A culturally responsive teacher acts in ways that are diametrically opposed to the traditional lecturer, the “sage on the stage” who focuses on “content delivery” instead of the learner (Schwerdt & Wuppermann, 2011). The interpersonal or affective dimensions of teaching have been discussed for decades. Kleinfeld (1972) coined the phrase “warm demander” to describe the type of teacher who was effective in teaching Athabascan Indian and Eskimo 9th graders in Alaskan schools. These teachers communicated personal warmth and used an instructional style Kleinfeld called "active demandingness." They insisted that students perform to a high level.

This quality of genuinely caring for students, while keeping high expectations for academic work is a key element of CRT. “While ‘caring about’ conveys feelings of concern for one’s state of being, ‘caring for’ is active engagement in doing something to positively affect it” (Gay, 2010, p. 216). It follows that if teachers are “warm demanders”, students will not only make academic gains, but they will also make gains in terms of self-confidence and self-concept. This research intends to examine the effects of CRT on the self-efficacy of middle school students.

Despite the numerous research studies and articles delving into the effects of CRT on students, after an extensive survey of published research, I was unable to find a single study that directly examines the relationship between CRT and student self-efficacy. There are studies and articles exploring Culturally Responsive Teaching and: mathematics (Averill et al., 2009), resilience among adolescent readers (Lenski & Lewis, 2008), school reform (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015), teacher efficacy (Jenkins-Martin, 2014), academic performance among Hispanic students (Chun & Dickson, 2011), developing literacy in second language learners (Tembe, 2008) and science, writing and ethno-mathematics (Hollins & Oliver, 1999). There is a strong case being made in this work that CRT has positive outcomes for students, schools and teachers. One extensive study determined positive student outcomes across content areas: math, science, history/social studies and English Language Arts (Aronson & Laughter, 2015). And, there are now rich accounts of the practical implementation of CRT in a variety of contexts (Brown, 2007; Santamaria, 2009). However, since adolescents are engaged in the business of developing self-concepts and identity, it makes sense to see how CRT effects this psychological,

emotional development.

2.3 Related Research

Although there has been considerable scholarly work examining, defining, and theorizing culturally responsive research and effective teaching, this research attempts to examine teachers' beliefs and perceptions of culturally responsive teaching, as well as how these practices influence middle school students in terms of self-efficacy and school success. The research is a natural outgrowth of the scholarly work in this field that emerged in the early 1990's.

2.3.1 Culturally responsive teaching.

In addition to the work by Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings has contributed to the research and theory regarding culturally responsive teaching through her extensive work including: culturally responsive teaching theory (1995a, 1995b), critical race theory in education (1998), teaching in diverse classrooms (2001), and diversity and teacher education (2005). Ladson-Billings has articulated not only what culturally responsive teaching looks like in the classroom in terms of pedagogy, but also the notion that effective teachers play a critical role in society in terms of social justice and equity (1998). There are elements of culturally responsive pedagogy that are established best practices in teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). In this article, she presents her findings from a study that examines culturally relevant teaching in the context of a three-year study of successful teachers of African American students. She defines culturally relevant teaching as "a pedagogy of opposition, not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment" (p. 160). She asserts that culturally responsive teaching relies on three factors, that students must: (a) achieve success in school, (b) develop cultural competence, and (c) develop a critical consciousness to challenge the current social order.

Ana Maria Villegas has also profoundly influenced the discourse about culturally responsive teaching. Her work examines the intersection between teacher preparation and culturally and linguistically diverse student populations (Villegas, 1991; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In her foundational work with Tamara Lucas, she cites six strands or areas of emphasis for preparing culturally responsive teachers: (a) sociocultural consciousness, (b) an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds, (c) commitment and skills to act as agents of change, (d) constructivist views of learning, (e) learning about students, and (f) culturally responsive teaching practices (2002). Although this research will focus on teaching

practices in middle school classrooms through interviews and surveys, the research will also examine these other perspectives and beliefs which are necessary for teachers to become culturally responsive in diverse classrooms.

The research in classrooms related to culturally responsive teaching include several small studies that connect culturally responsive teaching with engagement (Bean, Valerio, Senior, & White, 1999; Hill, 2009). There have also been several studies that suggest that culturally relevant teaching and examples impact student achievement for Native Hawai‘ian students: (Boggs et al., 1985) and (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), for African American students (Moses & Cobb, 2001) and Alaska Native students (Lipka et al., 2014). There are also several studies and reviews of research supporting the notion that culturally responsive teaching positively affects student learning, including: (a) cultural congruence in reading instruction, (b) speaking, (c) relating, and (d) learning at home and school (Boggs et al., 1985); engaging adolescents in reading (Guthrie, 2008); the impact of school, family, and community connections (Henderson & Mapp, 2002); and culturally relevant pedagogy, a synthesis of classroom-based research (Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008).

Although this scholarly record is impressive for the field of culturally responsive teaching, the intent of this study will be to identify and define culturally responsive teaching in the specific context of Alaskan middle schools, rural and urban.

Of importance to the current study, Boon and Lewthwaite present findings of a three-phase study examining culturally responsive pedagogies and their influence on Indigenous student outcomes in Australia (2015). Characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogies obtained through interviews with Australian Indigenous parents and students generated characteristics and themes, which were then developed into survey items. The resulting survey instrument was applied to practicing teachers for validation. What is most relevant about this research are the categories that emerged with “Teacher Ethic of Care” defined as the foundation for all teaching practices, characterized by respectful, positive, and warm interactions with students. Teachers communicate their regard for all dimensions of learning, including social development. There is much literature that emphasized the importance of relationships and interactions between teachers and students, however Boon and Lewthwaite suggest that this characteristic of culturally responsive pedagogy is of primary concern. The other categories that came out of their study included: (a) teacher cultural values, (b) literacy teaching, (c) explicit

teaching practices, (d) behaviour support (for self-regulation), and (e) structural support from schools for effective teaching practices (2015). Much of the conversation in Alaska about Culturally Responsive Teaching has focused on curriculum, instruction and the integration of local culture, environment and community. This study suggests that “Ethic of Care” is at least equally important to effective teaching.

2.3.2 Research on teacher effectiveness.

Although this study will examine the connections between culturally responsive teaching and student achievement and efficacy, one of the critical lenses will be research on teacher effectiveness. In order to draw connections and correlations between teaching practice and student achievement and efficacy, it will be critical to place this work in the context of the extensive research on teacher effectiveness. A meta-analysis of research related to teacher effectiveness provides a rich and compelling overview of literally hundreds of studies (Wilson & Floden, 2003). There are several articles and studies that look across the research on efficacy, but this study organizes the data and findings in a thoughtful structure aligned with the methodology of many of the studies. Specifically, Wilson and Floden analyzed 11 “hard questions” related to teacher effectiveness. These questions are related to: (a) Characteristics of new teachers, (b) Subject knowledge and advanced degrees, (c) Knowledge of pedagogical and learning theory, (d) Impact of field-based experiences, (e) Length of teacher preparation programs, (f) Alternative preparation programs and retention, (g) The relationship between certification requirements and efficacy, (h) The relationship between accreditation and efficacy, (i) Effects of “warranties” and remediation, (j) Teacher preparation strategies, and (k) Admission requirements for teacher preparation programs (2003). Although all of these are relevant to establishing a framework for determining teacher efficacy, in this study I’d like to focus on the classroom, in order to clearly identify effective teachers and their beliefs and practices. Hence, I thought two of the 11 “hard questions” were particularly relevant. First, this study examined research that addressed this question: “To what extent does knowledge of pedagogical theory, or child development contribute significantly to a teacher’s effectiveness? What pedagogical knowledge is most important?” (Wilson & Floden, 2003).

This gets back to the perennial discussion around the art and science of teaching. Faculty in teacher preparation programs often discuss what is most essential for pre-service teachers to learn prior to a career in teaching. The findings of this report include: “The educators weighted

management of the learning process highest, followed by human development and the learning process, curriculum planning and design, assessment and the learning process, and professional issues related to teaching and learning” (Wilson & Floden, 2003, p. 24). Many studies dating back to the 1970’s have grappled with the relationship between a teacher’s understanding of learning theory, development and learning processes, and effective teaching. In order to understand the culturally responsive teaching, it is important to consider the complexity of effective teaching. There is no single strategy or practice that results in effective teaching, instead effectiveness is achieved through a combination of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that result in effective strategies.

The other question that was particularly pertinent to teacher effectiveness relates to preparation and urban/rural schools. “Are there any teacher preparation strategies that are likely to increase the effectiveness of new teachers in hard-to-staff or low performing schools? What about in urban or remote schools?” (Wilson & Floden, 2003, p. 8). There was limited research to be analyzed in response to this question, but in general the study suggests that pre-service teachers should be equipped to address obstacles created by cultural and linguistic differences between teachers and students. The question of teacher efficacy in urban and rural “hard to staff” schools is a critical question to be explored further. Since I am more familiar with the cultural complexity and context of Alaskan rural schools, I will attempt to analyze and evaluate this question.

2.3.3 Domains of teacher effectiveness.

There are numerous studies that describe or establish domains for examining teacher effectiveness. There were many commonalities among the frameworks discussed. The research on teacher effectiveness, including the work regarding domains and categories, will inform the fidelity scale that will be employed to evaluate culturally responsive teaching in middle school classrooms. One of the most critical domains of teacher effectiveness is regarding teachers’ perceptions of efficacy. There are some commonalities when teachers are asked about effectiveness, and the factors which lead to teachers becoming master teachers or exemplary teachers in the field. For currently practicing teachers, the importance of professional development is often cited. Teachers valued programs that provided a systematic way to observe and interpret the students’ work and actions (Gabriel, Day, & Allington, 2011). Engaged autonomy was also critical to the perceptions of efficacy for teachers in this study who reported

that, “the freedom to engage in both individual and group decision-making led to teachers feeling supported, trusted and valued as professional” (p. 40). Much of the work on secondary teachers’ perceptions of efficacy contradicts stereotypes and generalizations about high school teachers in comparison to elementary teachers. The commonly held belief that secondary teachers think primarily in terms of cognitive or subject matter terms was not supported, at least in how these teachers conceptualize their own success. This study continues to suggest that it is very difficult for teachers to articulate their own perceptions of effectiveness, to evaluate their own practice in terms of success. However, broadly stated, this study suggested that secondary teachers’ perceptions of effectiveness were based more on their own evaluation of their pedagogy and “stylistic qualities” of their teaching, versus whether or not specific student learning goals or objectives were attained (Harootunian, 1980). This study compared responses by elementary, middle school, and high school teachers. The study did not find significant differences in perceptions of efficacy among these groups.

There is also significant research in the area of “teacher as a person” as a domain of effective teaching. Throughout the literature of teacher preparation and professional development of teachers, there are references to the “hidden curriculum” and the importance of interpersonal relationships and respect between students and teachers.

There is a widespread belief that this quality is especially important in diverse classrooms and cross-cultural teaching contexts. However, one of the domains examined sets this research apart from others (Wimberly, Faulkner, & Moxley, 1978). The domain titled “The teacher as a person,” includes the following descriptors: (a) caring, (b) fairness and respect, (c) interaction with students, (d) enthusiasm, (e) motivation, and (f) dedication to teaching and reflective practice. Although this domain is discussed in the context of hiring effective teachers, the research suggests that this domain is probably the most critical in determining teacher effectiveness. And, therefore, beliefs around this domain of teacher effectiveness are critical to understand as a foundation to effective teaching. This domain contains some of the descriptors for the eight dimensions of teacher effectiveness that they refer to as “teacher capacity”. To evaluate this domain it would be critical to involve classroom teachers’ perceptions around the relational/emotional components of teaching.

For this research, it will be instrumental to assess a teacher’s understanding of pedagogy and instructional practice as it relates to cultural responsiveness and contextualized learning.

Throughout the literature on teacher effectiveness there are references to the importance of pedagogy (also referred to as instructional practice). Kington, Reed and Sammons in their study found that teachers at multiple levels (81 primary and secondary teachers), when asked about effective practice: “focused upon innovative pedagogical approaches related to the level of teacher expectations of pupils; creativity and flexibility; positive relationships; and praise and feedback” (2014, p. 550). This supports the findings of Gabriel, Day and Allington (2011), who also reported that secondary teachers tended to focus on pedagogy and stylistic qualities of their teaching. The fact that pedagogy is important to secondary teachers is not surprising considering that teachers believe professional development and “engaged autonomy” are critical for effective teaching. Ross and Bruce in their study “Professional Development Effects on Teacher Efficacy: Results of a Randomized Field Trial” found that teacher’s beliefs about improved instructional practice as a result of professional development related directly to their sense of effectiveness (Ross & Bruce, 2007). Through surveys and interviews this study examined the levels and opportunities for professional development in the area of culturally responsive teaching.

2.3.4 Cross-cultural contexts and rural schools

Although there has been research related to effective teaching in cross-cultural contexts and rural schools, much of the work was completed internationally. In order to consider the complexity of teacher efficacy in cross-cultural and rural teaching contexts, it is important to separate notions and beliefs around self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Albert Bandura defined perceived collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (1997, p. 241). In all schools there are many factors beyond a teacher’s beliefs and practices that influenced their effectiveness. School policies, district policies, state testing requirements, opportunities for professional development and teacher evaluation and collaboration all influence a teacher’s ability to teach. In rural schools and in cross-cultural contexts this is especially important.

In a study focusing on teachers’ collective efficacy, job satisfaction, and job stress in a cross-cultural context, 500 teachers from Canada, Korea, and the United States revealed that teacher collective efficacy predicted job satisfaction across settings. One of the most significant and interesting findings was related to job stress:

Job stress was negatively related to job satisfaction for North American teachers (i.e., teachers from Canada and the United States), whereas the cultural dimension of

collectivism was significantly related to job satisfaction for the Korean, but not for North American teachers. (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010, p. 464)

Since there is such a strong sense of collectivism in rural Alaskan communities, it will be interesting to unpack this question in rural high schools, particularly regarding teachers who are from “the outside” versus teachers who are indigenous to the communities where they teach. Regardless, notions of collective efficacy will be critical to consider in cross-cultural and rural contexts.

As discussed earlier, teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention for Alaska’s rural schools is a well-documented issue. This study includes a focus on cross-cultural and rural teaching contexts in order to better understand effective teaching in this specific context. The research regarding teacher effectiveness in cross-cultural and rural contexts acknowledges the complexity of improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Brasche and Harrington (2012) discuss the critical need for collaboration:

Teacher recruitment and retention are but one aspect of a complex and multifaceted set of circumstances that influence Indigenous educational achievement, of which bilingual education, adult literacy levels, homeland education and Indigenous capacity-building are among many significant contributing factors. There is a critical need for cross-institutional collaboration on Indigenous education, and the preparation and support for both pre-and in-service teachers is an obvious starting point. (p. 123)

There is a fair amount of agreement in the research about teacher effectiveness, particularly regarding these domains: (a) the importance of professional development and autonomy for decision-making, (b) knowledge of pedagogical knowledge and instructional strategies, and (c) the qualities which comprise the notion of “teacher as a person”. The research of teacher effectiveness and efficacy will inform the effort to connect culturally responsive teaching with school success and self-efficacy for middle school students.

As described here there are many factors that influence self-efficacy, particularly for adolescents. One pervasive factor is ethnicity. In one study, both self-esteem and ethnic identity were identified as influences upon adolescents’ perception of their ability to achieve academically (self-efficacy), and also regarding their perception of goal attainment (Smith, Walker, Fields, Brookins, & Seay, 1999). It is also important to consider that in addition to ethnicity, there are other factors, particularly in Alaska that influence self-concept, self-esteem

and self-efficacy. In a recent study by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, slightly more than one-third (35.6%) of adult Alaskans disclosed zero Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), more than one out of four (27.4%) indicated that they experienced three or more ACEs before the age of 18 years old. ACEs are experiences with abuse, household dysfunction and neglect (Chamberlain, 2016). These data resulted in a statewide initiative to educate service providers. Although traumatic events and ACEs occur in both rural and urban communities, the effects in small, isolated, close knit communities can be widely felt and long lasting.

2.4 Summary

After more than a century of conflict and institutional racism, public education in Alaska still results in a persistent and pervasive achievement gap for minority students, particularly for Alaska Native and American Indian students. There is considerable scholarly work and emerging research that supports the widely held notion that culturally responsive teaching positively influences academic achievement for all students, particularly those who have been marginalized in public school systems. Since adolescence is a time of great change and perceptions of self-concept, identity, and self-efficacy are in flux, this research will examine the connections between culturally responsive research and self-efficacy.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory design mixed methods approach (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006). The rationale for the mixed methods design within is grounded in the fact that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves, to capture the trends and details of a situation. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more robust analysis, taking advantage of the strengths of each (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Specifically, the sequential explanatory mixed methods design was selected because: “the quantitative data and results provide a general picture of the research problem; more analysis, specifically through the qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture” (Creswell, 2008, p. 542). This two-phase model demonstrates how the sequential explanatory design can be effective in terms of understanding quantitative data (Ivankova et al., 2006).

The methodology and instrumentation for this study are summarized in Figure 3, which outlines the sequence of activities undertaken for the sequential explanatory design mixed methods approach. The four sources of quantitative data to answer the research questions include: (a) classroom observation scale, (b) the Student Self-Efficacy Survey (online survey), (c) the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, and (d) the teacher and principal information forms. Qualitative data are gathered from the observations (notes and comments), principal and teacher interviews, and text comments from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey. The quantitative and qualitative data from the fall site visits informed the interview questions, the supplemental questions for the student self-efficacy survey, and the survey for the spring research site visits.

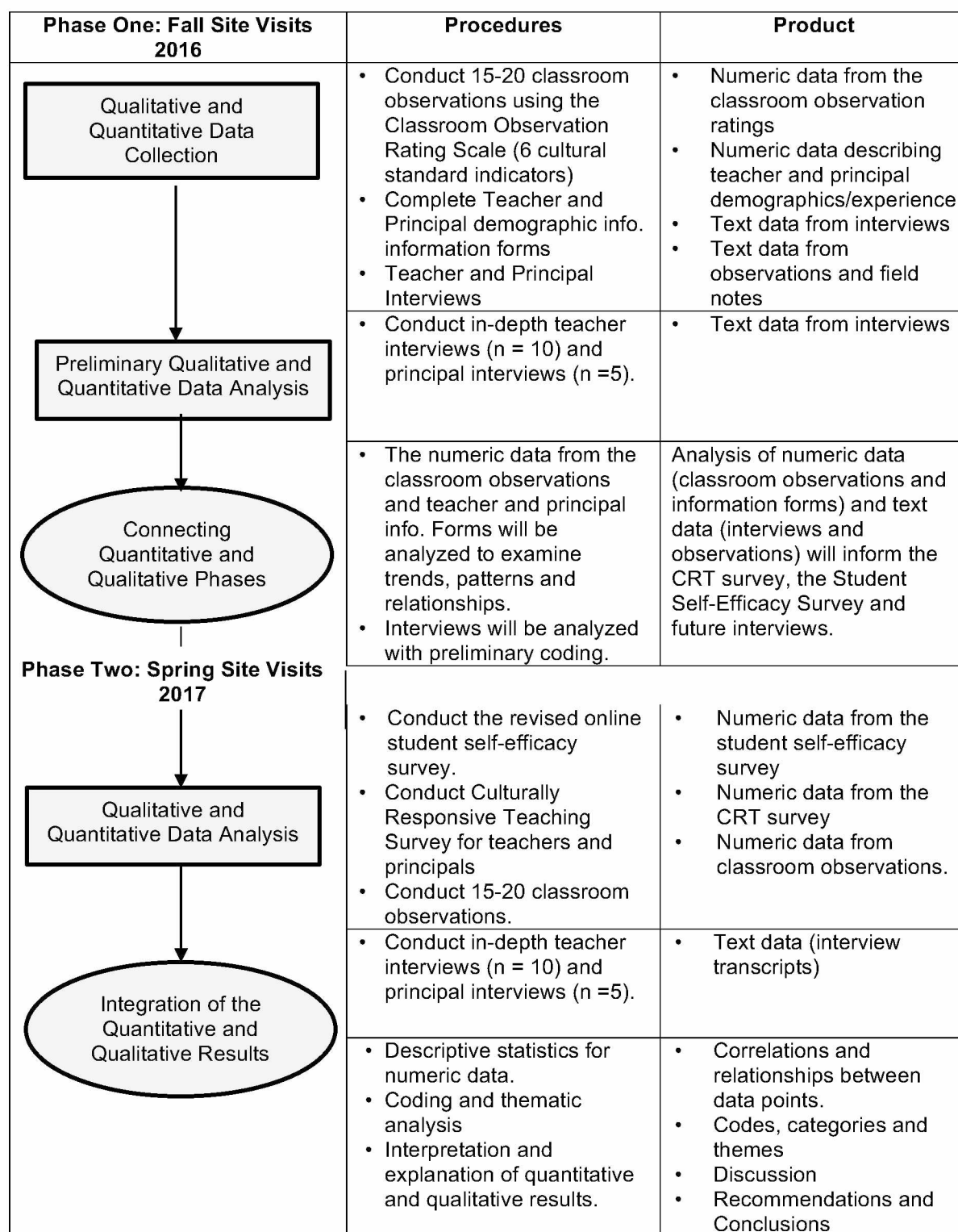


Figure 3: Model for Mixed-Methods: Sequential Explanatory Design Process

This mixed methods sequential explanatory design allowed for analysis and interpretation to inform the procedures and instruments throughout the research process, adapting to the complex context of Alaskan middle schools.

3.2 Timeline

After approval from the UAF Institutional Review Board in May of 2016, permission to conduct the research was granted from participating schools and districts. In the fall of 2016, I visited the ten schools for two to four days each, depending on school calendars and travel arrangements. During these visits, I conducted semiformal interviews, as well as classroom observations. After the fall visits, I finalized the survey questions informed by the interviews and developed a plan for collecting the parent consent forms for the Student Self-efficacy Survey. During the spring site visits, I administered the Student Self-Efficacy Survey to selected middle school students and completed the classroom observations and additional semi-structured interviews teachers and principals. These visits were also between two and four days on site at each of the ten schools. During the second round of visits, there were more informal observations and conversations, as school staff became familiar with my presence in the schools. In April 2017, after the site visits were completed, I administered the online Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey electronically for teachers and principals.

3.3 Participants

After the UAF Institutional Review Board approved this study (Appendix H) ten public Alaskan middle schools with culturally diverse student populations were selected. Middle schools are defined as grades five through nine for this study. Schools (10) were selected according to these criteria:

1. Schools with an established track record of culturally responsive teaching (Recommended by district administrators).
2. Different school size based on enrollment: Schools selected for this study include five small schools with less than 100 students enrolled in the K-12 community school: Anderson, Huslia, Point Lay, Akiuk, and the Science Technology Reading Engineering Art and Math Charter School (STrEaM). Three schools had between 101 and 200 students enrolled: Napaskiak, Nenana and Kongiginak, and two large middle schools with between 201 and 500 students enrolled: Blatchley Middle School in Sitka, Dzanitiki Heeni in Juneau.

3. Regional diversity: schools were from different regions in the state: North, Interior, South Central, and South East.

4. Interest in participating in a collaborative research study regarding culturally responsive teaching, student success and self-efficacy.

The school district administrations and site administrators had to approve the research. One district required school board approval (LKSD). One or two teachers from each site were invited to actively participate based on recommendations from the principals in each school.

Permission to conduct the research was received from each school district and when necessary, permission was requested by the school boards. Although there was a perception from the district administrations that these identified schools were enacting culturally responsive teaching, there was some anxiety and reluctance at the school level, because administrators and teachers were concerned about any public perceptions that they weren't meeting the terms of the state regulation for the cultural standards and teacher evaluation. One of the reasons that both surveys were delayed until the fall was the desire to establish working relationships and trust at all of the research sites. Informational conversations, observations, and the interviews were very helpful in this regard.

There is a clear distinction between the rural schools identified in this study as schools not connected to the road system or the Alaska Marine Highway. All of the five schools designated as rural enroll more than 94% Alaska Native or American Indian students. Table 5 shows the Enrollment by Ethnicity.

Table 5: Participating Schools, Enrollment by Ethnicity

Schools	2015 16	Nat. AK Am.Ind		Asian Pac. Is.		Black		Hisp.		Cauc.		2 or more	
Juneau	486	123	25%	51	10%	7	1%	20	4%	224	46%	0	0%
Sitka	261	76	29%	31	12%	1	0%	14	5%	120	46%	0	0%
Kongiginak	173	172	99%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%
Nenana	172	102	59%	3	2%	1	1%	3	2%	42	24%	12	7%
Anchorage	73	3	4%	4	5%	3	4%	5	7%	47	64%	11	15%
Napaskiak	158	157	99%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Akiuk	89	87	98%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%
Pt. Lay	83	81	98%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	0	0%
Huslia	83	78	94%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	2	2%	2	2%
Anderson	31	7	23%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%	22	71%	0	0%

Note: STReAM Academy in Anchorage began enrolling students in the fall of 2016. These enrollment data are for the 2016/17 school year for STReAM Academy only. These data came from the Alaska Dept. of Education and Early Development.

It is important to note that enrollment in all of the schools fluctuated throughout the year. For instance, in one small school the number of middle school students doubled after the holiday break when two families relocated from one community to another.

The majority of teachers participating in the interviews and classroom observations had six years or more of teaching experience. Figure 4 presents the number of years that participating teachers have been in the classroom.

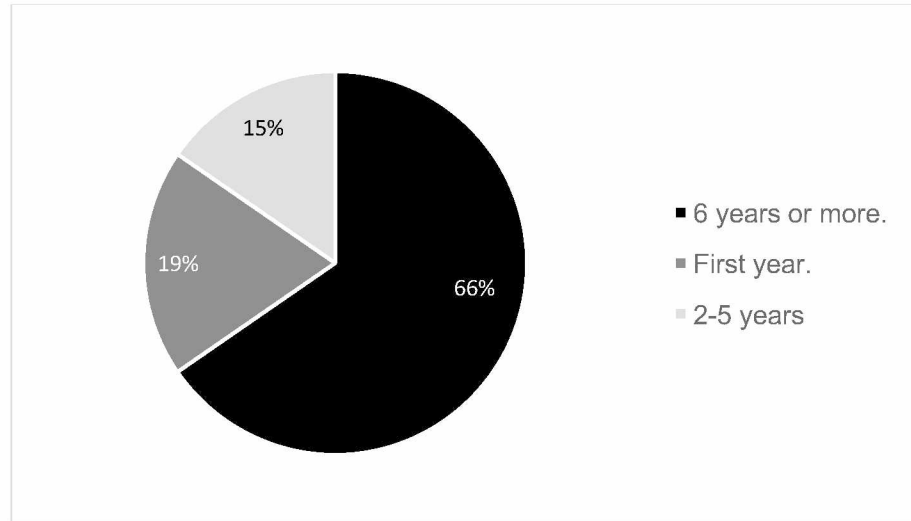


Figure 4: Years of Teaching Service by Participating Teachers (by percentage)

Student participation in the research varied across schools according to the principal's direction in terms of classes and grade levels, as well as teacher willingness to participate. After receiving permission from the district office to conduct the research, and when necessary approval came from the school board, there was a conversation with the principal of each school. During the first site visit, after introductions to the staff, specific teachers agreed to participate. Because of the very different configurations of grade levels at the ten schools, with two large middle schools with grades 6-8 only (201-500), four mid-size K-12 schools (101-200) and four small K-12 schools (<100), the number and age levels of the participating students varied. The number of students participating ranged from seven in Anderson to 55 in Juneau.

3.4 Instrumentation

Four instruments were implemented to provide quantitative data to answer the research questions and inform the qualitative aspects of the study. These are: (a) Teacher and Principal Information Forms, (b) Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, (c) Student Self-Efficacy

Survey, and (d) Classroom Observation Rating Scale. In-depth semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers were also conducted during the fall and spring site visits of all 10 research sites.

3.4.1 Teacher and Principal Information Forms.

The information forms gather basic demographic information and professional data for participating teachers and principals at each site including the following questions: (a) full name, (b) school and district, (c) grade levels and subjects taught, (d) number of years teaching, (e) location for teacher preparation program, and (f) experience with professional development in culturally responsive teaching. When the data were compiled the names were replaced by codes to respect the confidentiality of participants. Data from these forms were used to determine if there were relationships between experience teaching and/or professional development and the perceptions and implementation of culturally responsive teaching. See Appendix A and B for the Teacher and Principal Information Forms.

3.4.2 Classroom Observation Rating Scale.

In December 2012, the Alaska State Board of Education adopted the Alaska Cultural Standards for teacher evaluation. Four cultural standards are identified in regulations and must be considered when evaluating educators (AK-EED, 2015b). At the time of this adoption, there were minimal tools available to school districts for evaluation of educators. A previous attempt of implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards in 1999 had very limited success at best. As the No Child Left Behind Act consumed Alaskan schools and districts between 2002 and 2016, professional development and curriculum development related to the cultural standards were often neglected in pursuit of goals measured on school report cards (annual yearly progress reports).

The Classroom Observation Rating Scale, implemented through iObservation, a digital evaluation tool, evaluates six indicators for the four required Alaska Cultural Standards through the observation of student and teacher behaviors in the classroom. The Culture in the Classroom: Indicators and Evidences for Evaluating Culturally Proficient Teaching was created for the purpose of teacher evaluation (Appendix B). This document was developed as part of the Southeast Alaska Regional Resource Center's (SERRC) Project CREATE (Culturally Responsive Evidences for Alaska Teacher Effectiveness) to develop and support a teacher evaluation framework based on Alaska Teacher Standards and Alaska Cultural Standards for

Educators. The Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators complement other state standards by orienting the school community to its role in helping students become responsible, capable, and whole human beings. The Cultural Standards emphasize a strong connection between what students experience in school and their lives out of school by providing in-depth, experiential learning in real-world contexts. This tool is currently in use in 22 Alaskan school districts. Fifteen experienced educators representing every region of Alaska produced this tool with an iterative process of writing, sharing with colleagues in their home school districts, and revising. This teacher evaluation tool integrates the cultural standards with the Marzano teacher evaluation framework (Marzano, 2012). This tool allowed me to score the teacher observations according to the six Cultural Standards (indicators) that are observable in the classroom:

1. CA2: Supporting New Content with Cultural Connections
2. CA3: A Classroom Environment with Cultural Connections
3. CA4: Student Engagement with Cultural Connections
4. CB2: Engaging Students with Authentic Local Resources
5. CE2: Helping All Students to Demonstrate and Apply Knowledge
6. CE3: Maintaining Relationships that Support Achievement

Each of these indicators is described through example student and teacher behaviors as potential evidence towards the ranking on the six-point scale: not applicable, not using, beginning, developing, applying, and innovating. Multiple observations occurred in middle school classrooms during a weeklong visit to each of the schools in the fall. I then followed up with observations in the same classrooms using the same tool in the spring. In addition to numeric data gathered from the tool, I took copious sequential notes as part of a running record as a narrative of classroom instruction and interaction (Perry, VandeKamp, Mercer, & Norby, 2002).

3.4.3 The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE).

This scale was selected to answer the research question: How is culturally responsive teaching connected to student self-efficacy in Alaskan middle schools? Developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem, the GSE has been translated and implemented in 33 languages (Schwarzer, 2014). In addition to the 10 questions, additional questions were developed that focus on cultural perspectives of efficacy and academic aspirations. Sample questions include: (a) I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough; (b) If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want; (c) It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish

my goals. After the fall visits I developed questions specific to the students' perceptions related to confidence (self-efficacy) and culturally responsive teaching. See Appendix G for the General Efficacy Scale.

3.4.3.3 Student self-efficacy survey.

In looking at the research on self-efficacy, it quickly became apparent that the examination of efficacy is most often used as a predictor of something else, which is exactly the inverse of this project, which intends to examine how CRT predicts self-efficacy and student success. In other words, in every study I found regarding self-efficacy, it was the independent variable in the research, while other factors and conditions, mostly in the health field were dependent variables. Research related to self-efficacy in adolescents includes: resilience and diabetes (Winsett, Stender, Gower, & Burghen, 2010), sexual risk taking (Rosenthal, Moore, & Flynn, 1991), academic self-concept (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003), performance and cognition (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990), cognitive development and functioning (Bandura, 1993), behavioral intentions (Vries, Dijkstra, & Kuhlman, 1988), and coping with stress (Chwalisz et al., 1992). In other words, there is extensive research related to adolescents and self-efficacy. However, the relationship between CRT and self-efficacy has not been directly examined.

When I began to research possible efficacy scales for this research, I found that there are literally hundreds of efficacy scales, from established scales that have been used in multiple studies to highly content specific scales with a narrow focus. Recent studies have featured the following scales with self-efficacy as an independent variable: self-efficacy scale for arthritis (Lorig, Chastain, Ung, Shoor, & Holman, 1989), career decision-making (Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996), fear of falling (Yardley et al., 2005), physical self-efficacy (Ryckman, Robbins, Thornton, & Cantrell, 1982), alcohol abstinence (Bouffard-Bouchard, 1990) and lastly, teacher efficacy (Henson, Kogan, & Vacha-Haase, 2001). Primarily for medical and behavioral research, there is a considerable body of work that considers self-efficacy as a predictor of various conditions, states and behaviors.

During the process to select an efficacy scale, first I eliminated any scales that were content specific, including academic self-efficacy scales. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between CRT and self-efficacy. GSE will be a valid and reliable instrument for this study. Several studies have established the construct validity of the GSE.

3.4.3.4 Reliability and validity of the GSE.

The GSE is also generally regarded as a standard, valid, reliable instrument for measuring self-efficacy. In terms of reliability, in samples from 23 nations, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. The scale is unidimensional.

In terms of validity, criterion-related validity is documented in numerous correlation studies where positive coefficients were found with favorable emotions, dispositional optimism, and work satisfaction. Negative coefficients were found with depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, and health complaints (Ryckman et al., 1982). Lastly, the fact the tool has been used and found to be valid and reliable with adolescents, while being very short (only 10 questions) makes this instrument a logical choice for this study.

3.4.4 The Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey.

This survey asked teachers, administrators, and community members to evaluate the extent to which the cultural standards are currently implemented in Alaskan Schools. Survey questions referred to the same six indicators for the cultural standards used for the Classroom Observation Scale so that the implementation of the standards can be viewed across instruments. There were also questions directly related to the research questions, regarding how teachers identify culturally responsive teaching, and how it is enacted in the participating schools. The survey was administered to all instructional staff and principals in the participating schools. The interview questions were developed after an analysis of initial data from the fall site visits. Numerous published surveys were reviewed and adapted for the initial construction of the survey (Barnes, 2006; Boon & Lewthwaite, 2015; Phuntsog, 2001; Siwatu, 2007). The initial form of this survey was originally field tested in the spring of 2015 with 14 graduate students in a research course. Results were analyzed and adjustments were made before the first iteration to more than 100 Alaskan educators. Questions were randomized. Then, 10 participants from the initial iteration were asked to complete the survey again, one month later. The scores on this second iteration were identical to the first instance, with the exception of one question, that was rephrased for the final survey. This process established the reliability of the survey (Creswell, 2008). A small group of faculty participated in another iteration of the survey. We then examined each question and the corresponding data to determine that the questions were examining culturally responsive teaching (validity). This group suggested that the question stems should be altered for teachers and principals, so that principals would be responding in terms of

their perceptions at the school level, and teachers would respond at the classroom level. The survey used in the research is a culmination of this process. See Appendix C for the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures were negotiated with the school staff and administration in advance, in order to avoid disruption of school schedules, and to comply with the protocols established in the IRB.

3.5.1 Surveys.

For the Culturally Responsive Teaching survey, email lists for the instructional staff, both certified and non-certified were compiled for the 10 schools. The lists were verified by principals. A separate coded form of the survey was sent to each school and to the principals in April of 2017, so that the survey data could be separated and compared by school, and with the administrators. Teachers were sent a code that was included at the end of the survey in order to qualify for the gift card, so the survey was anonymous. Out of 129 teachers who were invited to participate in the survey, 57 completed the survey (38%). The schools where the research was introduced by the principal, and teachers were encouraged to participate had a higher return rate (Akiuk, Huslia, STrEaM) and vice versa. All 10 principals participated in the survey.

For the Student Self-Efficacy survey, teachers collected the parent consent forms prior to the spring site visits when the surveys were administered. The surveys were delivered online through laptops or tablets. There were brief explanations of key vocabulary terms in each classroom before the students completed the surveys. I monitored the completion rates in the classroom to make sure that all students submitted the survey and the results posted.

3.5.2 Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews (Appendix D) took place before school, during preparation periods, lunch hours, after school and evenings during the fall and spring site visits. All of the interviews took place face to face and were recorded in classrooms. Interview subjects did not see the questions in advance, although there were informal conversations prior to the interviews and the subjects were familiar with the intent of the research. Classroom observations were conducted with all of the teachers prior to the interviews so that there was a context for the conversations. As the responses suggest, the interviews were informal and conversational. An online transcription service provided high quality transcripts of the interviews.

3.5.3 Classroom Observations.

Classrooms were observed to determine the level of implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards, as measured the iObservation, Culture in the Classroom tool (Appendix F). Data from this rating scale was gathered through site visits to all schools in the fall and spring with 38 formal observations during the fall and spring visits. The iObservation digital evaluation tool allows for several reports. A report presenting the numeric data from the five-point scale for each of the six indicators was compiled into a composite classroom observation rating score for each school. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Triangulation between the classroom observation scale data, survey data, and interview data was used. School district administrative personnel collaborated to ensure the data collection from all schools happened according to district policies related to privacy and security.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The teacher and principal interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. These semi-structured interviews included eight questions (Appendix D). Sample questions include: 1. What are the beliefs and practices of a culturally responsive teacher? 2. What do you consider to be promising practices or programs that incorporate culturally responsive teaching, or place-based curriculum in schools? 3. What are the challenges to enacting culturally responsive teaching in public schools? In order to develop a matrix for coding, the “continuing cycle of tryout and revision” process was implemented with multiple readings of the interview transcripts (Weston et al., 2001). The transcripts were coded by using two and three word labels and brackets based on the actual words of respondents (Creswell, 2008). A second reader applied the codes periodically in the process as they were revised. There were three categories for coding the interviews: (a) themes to describe the beliefs and practices of culturally responsive teachers, (b) challenges and barriers for implementing culturally responsive teaching and (c) parent and community views of schooling. Responses across the interview questions were coded according to these categories. After the codes were set through multiple readings, responses were tallied across interviews.

For quantitative data, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data from the classroom observations and both surveys.

3.7 Limitations

There are several limitations regarding this research.

1. The sample is a convenient sample of 10 schools in Alaska. Results may be limited in the extent to which findings apply beyond the research sites included in the study.

2. Because of the small sample size, it was difficult to demonstrate significance through descriptive statistics. A larger sample size is needed to demonstrate and clarify the relationship between culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy.

3. Although there were multiple iterations and focused efforts to establish validity and reliability for the surveys used in the study, survey results depend on the honesty of the participants completing the survey. In addition, some survey respondents may not completely understand the meaning of questions to which they respond, and recall of events may be flawed. For middle school students in particular, there was a wide disparity in reading levels, and since the survey was implemented to all students whose parents gave permission, there were students who speak English as a second language as well as students with learning disabilities participating in the study.

4. Data are affected to some extent by the perceptions and beliefs of the researcher who was also a participant in the collection. Research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, operate within a cultural context and may be interpreted differently by participants according to that context. This is particularly relevant to the interviews, which were instrumental in this study. Qualitative research in general is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher and more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. The researcher's presence during data gathering, which is often unavoidable in qualitative research, can affect the subjects' responses.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine 1. How teachers identify culturally responsive teaching, 2. How culturally responsive teaching is implemented, and 3. How culturally responsive teaching is connected to student self-efficacy. This chapter will present the results and descriptive statistics aligned with the research questions for five data sets collected from the following methods and instruments: (a) Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey (teachers and principals), (b) Student Self-Efficacy Scale (students), (c) Classroom Observation Scale, (d) Interviews (teachers and principals), and (e) a Closer Look at Akiuk Memorial School, including a summary comparison of results from the AASA 2016 School Climate and Connectedness Survey.

4.2 How Do Teachers Identify Culturally Responsive Teaching?

For both the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Survey and the Classroom Observation Scale six of the indicators of the Alaska Cultural Standards were investigated. These include:

CA2: Supporting New Content with Cultural Connections

CA3: A Classroom Environment with Cultural Connections

CA4: Student Engagement with Cultural Connections

CB2: Engaging Students with Authentic Local Resources

CE2: Helping All Students to Demonstrate and Apply Knowledge

CE3: Maintaining Relationships that Support Achievement

There is a clear relationship between the connections cited in these indicators of the standards and the “conduits” outlined by Gay (2010). These specific standards were selected because they are measurable and observable in the classroom. In order to present the research results related to this research question, we will examine two methods that were designed to illuminate the question.

4.2.1 Culturally responsive teaching survey results.

Teachers at the participating schools were invited to participate in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey through email. Table 6 shows the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey participation by school. Forty-seven percent of the instructional staff across

the 10 sites completed the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey. For the CRT Survey participation was incentivized with a gift card.

Table 6: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey Participation by School

School	Staff	Resp.	%
Juneau	29	12	41%
Sitka	22	8	36%
Kongiginak	13	5	38%
Nenana	12	4	33%
Napaskiak	12	7	58%
Pt. Lay	11	3	27%
Akiuk	10	6	60%
Huslia	9	6	67%
STrEaM (ANC)	7	4	57%
Anderson	4	2	50%
	129	57	47%

Note: The number of staff varied from school to school according to configuration of grade levels.

This online survey was conducted in April of 2017. Table 7 presents the results of Questions 1-6. Table 8 presents the results of Questions 7-9. Questions 10-13 were either multiple choice or text responses.

Table 7: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey n=57, Questions 1-6

Questions	Not Using %	Beginning %	Developing %	Applying %	Innovating %	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. ...integrate and connect traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students when interacting with new content.	2.99	7.46	28.36	52.24	8.96	3.57	0.87
2. ...incorporate students' cultural traditions, customs, values and practices when designing the classroom environment.	4.48	16.42	32.84	38.81	7.46	3.28	0.98
3. ...incorporate students' traditions, customs, values, and practices to engage them in learning.	0.00	7.46	17.91	62.69	11.94	3.79	0.75

Table 7 (cont'd)

Questions	Not Using %	Beginning %	Developing %	Applying %	Innovating %	Mean	Standard Deviation
4. ...engage students in learning experiences that integrate the local environment, community resources, and issues when interacting with content.	1.49	11.94	28.36	44.78	13.43	3.57	0.92
5. ... provide rigorous learning opportunities for students that combine higher order thinking skills and student autonomy.	0.00	7.46	28.36	46.27	17.91	3.75	0.84
6. ...value and respect for all students of all cultures and challenge them to strive for educational excellence.	0.00	4.48	8.96	55.22	31.34	4.13	0.76

Table 8: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey n=57, Questions 7-9

Questions: Agree/Disagree	Not at All True %	Hardly True %	Moderately True %	Exactly True %	Mean	Standard Deviation
7. The Alaska Cultural Standards represent the critical practices and habits of mind for culturally responsive teaching.	0.00	7.46	53.73	38.81	3.31	0.61
8. The Alaska Cultural Standards are widely implemented in our school.	4.48	16.42	58.21	20.90	2.96	0.75
9. Culturally responsive teaching influences student self-efficacy and success in school.	1.49	2.99	40.30	55.22	3.49	0.64

The mean scores for the first nine questions on the survey are shown in Figure 5. Participants had to select a response from the five point Likert Scale. The overall mean for the first nine questions on the survey for all participants was 3.5. This indicates a perception that the 10 participating schools are generally in the range of “developing” to “applying” when it comes to implementing the six Alaska Cultural Standards examined in this study. Questions 1-6, which

ask specifically about the six indicators of the cultural standards, scored means of 3.28 (developing) to 4.13 (applying). In both the survey and the classroom observations there were very few ratings for “innovating.” Although teachers are generally aware that they are supposed to be evaluated according to the standards, since the survey was anonymous, it is likely that teachers were honest in their responses. In general, the survey responses are also aligned with the interview responses.

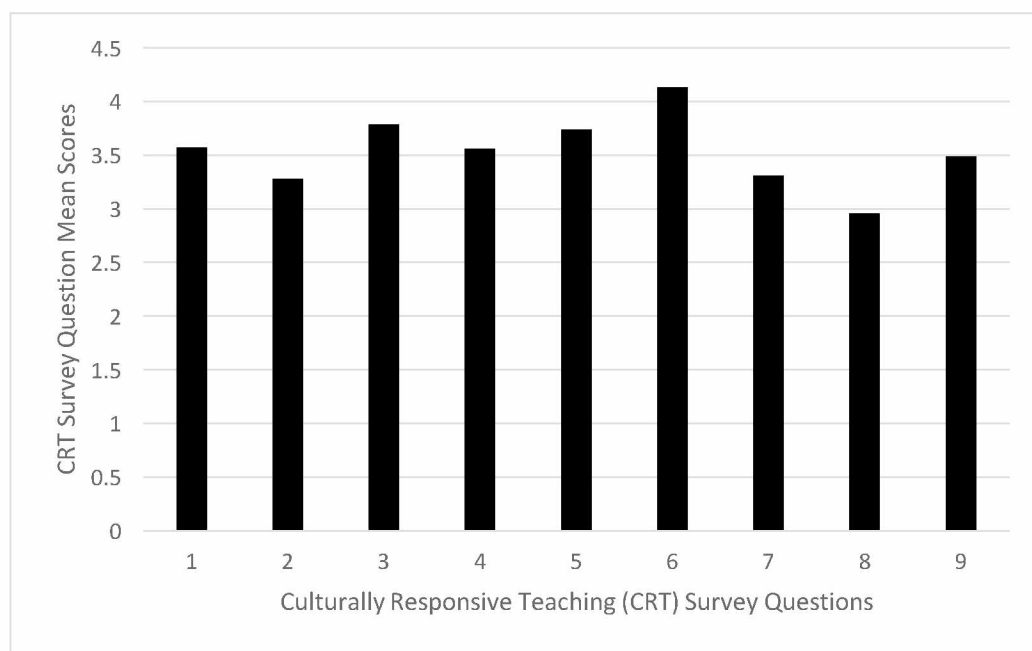


Figure 5: Mean scores for Responses to Questions 1-9 on the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

In this survey, Question 6 was scored the highest, ($M= 4.13$, $SD=.76$). This question asks about the degree to which teachers “...demonstrate value and respect for all students of all cultures and challenge them to strive for educational excellence” (AK Cultural Standards CE3). Although there is other data from this study that suggest that teachers and principals do not connect culturally responsive teaching, or the cultural standards with academic achievement, the sense that valuing and respecting students is a critical aspect of culturally responsive teaching was reflected through other questions on the survey, as well as in the interviews with teachers and principals. The question that scored the lowest was Question 8 ($M= 2.96$, $SD=.75$); it asked about the degree to which “The Alaska Cultural Standards are widely implemented” in schools.

The notion that the implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards is developing in the participating middle schools is also backed up by the interviews and the classroom observation data, to be discussed later. It is also clear that very few teachers or principals felt that schools were innovating when it comes to the Alaska Cultural Standards.

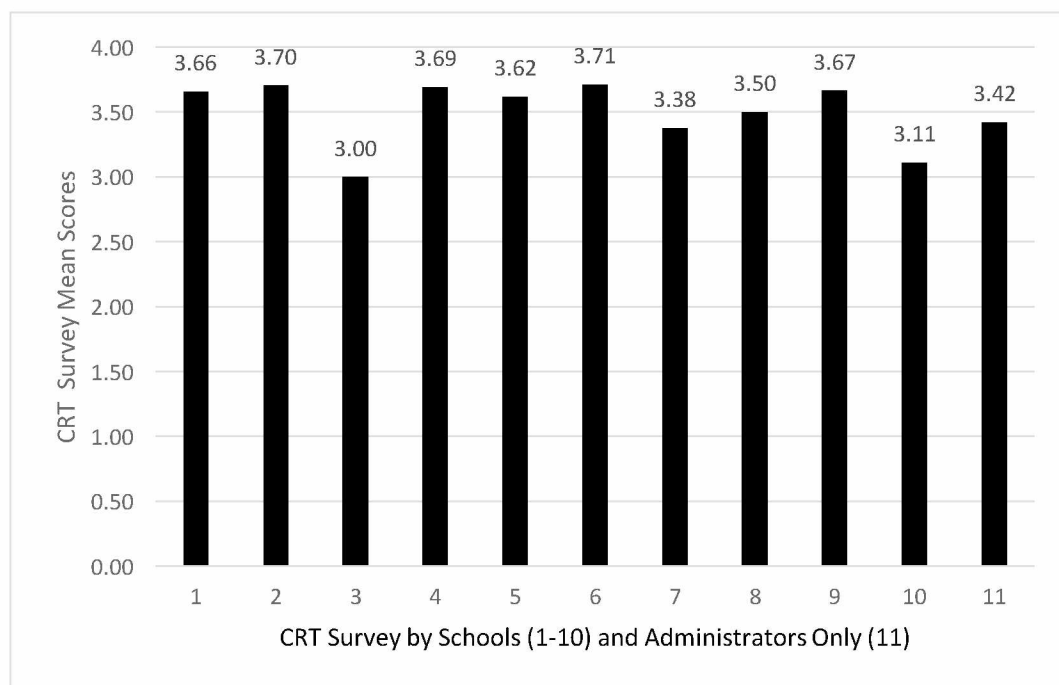


Figure 6: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, Questions 1-9 for Teachers at ten schools (1-10) and all administrators (11).

Question 10 on the CRT survey asked respondents: “Which of the following practices do you consider to be *most* important for culturally responsive teaching?” With 50% of respondents ranking “establishing rapport” as the most important practice for culturally responsive teaching, and no respondents selecting “developing culturally responsive units”, the overall response to the question suggests that teachers and principals perceive the practice of culturally responsive teaching to be more about positive interactions with students and building productive relationships, versus the implementation of culturally relevant or place-based curriculum. Also, with only 18% of respondents indicating that “establishing academic expectations” is the most important practice, there is a perception that culturally responsive teaching is not connected to academic expectations/performance. This notion is reinforced by the response to Question 13

“How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students?” No respondents (0%) indicated that CRT influenced students in terms of “academic achievement.” The responses to Question 10 are presented in Figure 7.

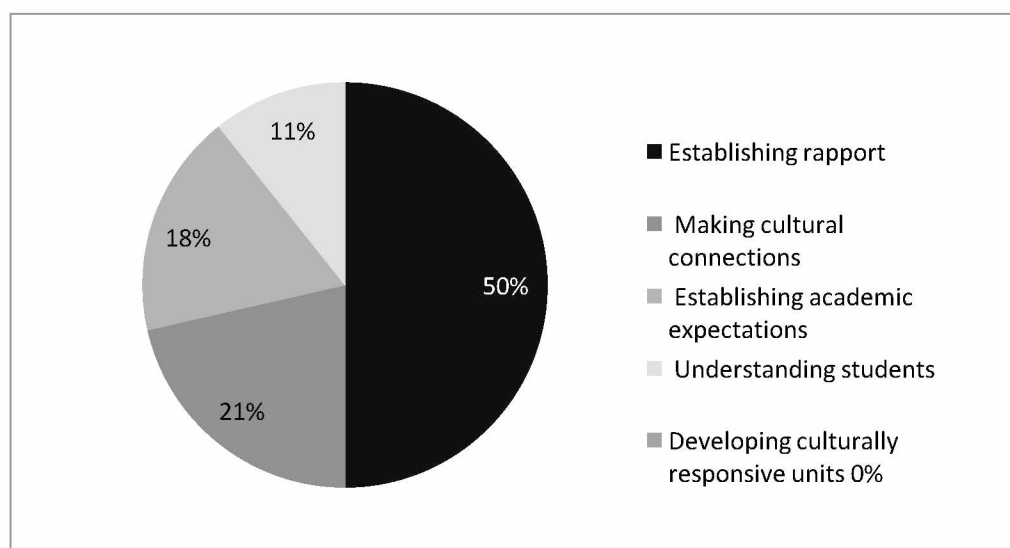


Figure 7: Responses to Question 10 from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, Most important practices for culturally responsive teaching, n = 56.

There seems to be a disconnect between Question 10 where respondents indicated that the most important aspect of CRT was “establishing a positive rapport” and the response to Question 11 where nearly half (48%) indicated that either the lack of training and resources (27%) or pressure regarding testing (26%) were the primary challenges to implementing culturally responsive teaching. It seems as though neither of these challenges would impact a teacher’s ability to establish a positive rapport. However, the survey in a larger sense suggests that teachers are either developing or applying culturally responsive teaching practices and they are finding it to be challenging in the context of a lack of quality, sustained training, and resources, and the consistent pressure to teach to the test. The response to this question also suggests that teachers and principals “identify culturally responsive teaching”, through practice that extends beyond the indicators and evidences cited in the *Culture in the Classroom* tool (SERRC, 2015).

Despite the sense that a lack of resources and training were significant challenges indicated through Question 11, the 46 respondents who responded to Question 12 cited 57

diverse examples of promising practices. Table 10 presents sample responses to Question 12: “What do you see as promising practices, programs or quality resources for culturally responsive teaching in your school, district, or elsewhere?” This question was intentionally open-ended in order to elicit a wide range of practices and programs across districts and schools. It should be noted that there is nearly a complete absence of promising practices and programs for culturally responsive teaching that are focused on academic content areas, and/or academic learning. There was one mention of the “Math in Cultural Context” program, and many of the professional development and training opportunities are focused on developing culturally responsive curriculum across the disciplines. However, looking across the responses to this question, teachers and principals seem to suggest that school, district, and tribal programs and resources are needed to develop and apply culturally responsive teaching practices.

Table 9: Responses to Question 12 from the CRT Survey

Category	n	Sample response
District or School Level Programs	11	The “Creating Cultural Competence” (C-3) program, which is run by the AK Humanities Forum for LKSD new teachers. Also, the Dual Language Enrichment program and the Dual Language materials that are being developed in LKSD are culturally responsive (not just for the language
Professional Dev., Courses	11	Classes offered by the university to further our knowledge of the culture that we work in. Some of the native teachers have a great knowledge and we are lucky if they share this information it is good if there are resources to give them financial assistance for their time and materials used.
Teacher habits of mind	9	As Alaskan teachers, we are especially favored to have the rich and dynamic oral traditions of our indigenous communities and of the other cultural groups who have come here to make their homes. It is these traditions that we need to work to embrace through actively listening to our students. This affirms our students’ dignity and helps develop a trusting relationship between us...
Books	5	Culturally responsive standards-based teaching 2nd edition; Stop talking: indigenous ways of teaching and learning and difficult dialogues in higher education; Qanruyuteput linruugut: Our Teachings Are Medicine
Cultural Activities and Programs	5	Staff and students would go out on cultural trips for a week and practice hunting out on the sea. I see this as an opportunity with students here in Huslia and going hunting/trapping out towards hot springs.
Other	13	Other responses with lower frequency included: websites, online resources (4), Staffing, District or School (specialists, 4), Alaska Cultural Standards (2) and Student Expectations (2), Rapport and Relationships (1)

Category	n	Sample response
Rapport and Relationships	1	This question seems to target a program-related answer, and I am coming up short when I try to think of names or websites, authors, or programs. On the other hand, I think there is a lot of potential (and application) for educators to develop and innovate culturally responsive teaching that is based more on rapport and relationship, and less on program.
Total	58	

The “promise” of promising practices seems to be outside of the classroom. Perhaps it was the way that the question was asked, but there are no examples of classroom pedagogy or teacher driven curriculum cited as promising. The “rapport and relationships” response was unique in that it referred to a classroom practice, based on the interactions between teachers and students, an area frequently referred to in the interviews.

In summary, the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey presents the perception among teachers and principals that culturally responsive teaching is widely implemented across the schools. However, the implementation is mainly at the developing and applying level. The survey suggests a perception that the participating schools are generally in the range of “developing” to “applying” when it comes to implementing the three cultural standards (CA, CB and CE) according to six indicators from the Culture in the Classroom publication. Questions 1-6 which ask specifically about the six cultural standards, scored means of 3.28 (developing) to 4.13 (applying).

Although the results of these four questions from the survey provide important answers to this research question, it was the interviews with teachers and principals where a complex understanding of the identification of culturally responsive teaching emerged, something quite separate from the Alaska Cultural Standards. The relationship between the responses to these questions and the results of the interviews will be discussed in the final chapter.

4.2.2 Interview results.

The semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals often followed different directions according to the interests and responses of the interview subjects. There were eight questions that were asked of most subjects, depending on time. Appendix D presents these questions. The focus here will be on two interview questions: 1. What are the beliefs and practices of a culturally responsive teacher? and 2. What are the challenges to enacting culturally

responsive teaching in public schools? Table 10 presents a breakdown of the interview subjects.

Table 10: Interview Subjects

	Rural Teachers	Rural Principals	Urban Teachers	Urban Principals	Total Interviews
Interview Subjects	10	5	11	5	31

Note: All interview subjects were employed at the ten middle schools.

4.2.3 Interview results: “What are the beliefs and practices of a culturally responsive teacher?”

The responses to “What are the beliefs and practices of a culturally responsive teacher?” reflect the varied understandings, perceptions, definitions and experience that teachers have with this practice. Table 11 presents the number of responses according to categories representing aspects of culturally responsive teaching. These categories evolved from multiple readings and coding of the interview transcripts. There were also notes about the interviews as part of the field notes from site visits.

Table 11: Categories Representing Aspects of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Category	Rural Teachers	Rural Principals	Urban Teachers	Urban Principals	Total Responses	% of Int. Subjects
Local Connections	8	2	7	3	20	65%
Relationships	4	1	3	4	12	39%
Teacher as Learner	6	1	3	1	11	35%
Empathy	5	2	0	0	7	23%
AK Cultural Standards	0	2	2	1	5	16%
Walking in Two Worlds	1	2	0	1	4	13%
High Expectations	1	2	0	1	4	13%
Students as Teachers	1	0	2	0	3	1%

Note: The responses are not mutually exclusive. The responses were coded according to the primary focus of the response. Subjects often reported in more than one category.

The following tables present excerpted sample responses by category in the order of frequency. The complete table with the full text of categorized responses is presented in Appendix E. Table 12 presents examples from the four most frequent categories by interview

subjects: Local Connections (65%), Relationships (39%), Teacher as Learner (35%) and Empathy (23%).

Table 12: Categorized Responses of Interview Subjects (Most Frequent Categories)

Connections to Community, Culture, History and/or Place

1. Getting to know students changes the whole game. You don't just teach from a textbook when that happens, you end up doing more pull-in from other resources, local resources, local people that might help out. Instead of just teaching according to whatever your text book says, you have to bring it home... We're doing it currently where the kids can say ... "Oh, I know what that is," or "I've heard that before," and then they can start jumping in, then the buy-in becomes much higher. if you start talking about things that are happening in their daily lives, there's more engagement, and more hands are firing up in the air. You just see the energy in the room go up.
2. Because I'm immersed in this culture and I lived here for so long, I point out our values constantly. I always tell them, "Yupik people do this. Yupik people don't do that. I don't think your parents will appreciate it if they know that you're doing this." I bring out all of those cultural values that I know with my students and I also work with them. I'm always using our culture as the backbone to how I expect my kids to behave. If I weren't from here, if I weren't Yupik or didn't know about the culture, I would definitely want to be open minded to things that I don't know about and if there's something that's brought up in class that I would ask another adult and find out about it.

Relationships

1. However, the thing that it (culturally responsive teaching) keeps coming down to...is the social and emotional needs of our students and the cultural aspects of that...What does it mean to be identifying and addressing the social-emotional needs of our kids? The only way that is successful...is by having relationships, quality relationships with students." Whenever I ask students, I ask them a lot. "Hey, what's your favorite class?" They always say, "It's Mr. or Mrs. so and so." They don't say it's Science. They don't say it's Math. They name the teacher. They are not doing that to indicate it's not about the subject but in their mind, the class is the teacher. The class is not the subject. The class is the teacher.
2. Especially, living in such a small community, we are a family, these are our kids, we have them for four or five years at a time, and we see them grow up, and so they really do become a part of our family. You have to help them understand the problems that are going on in their life and how to handle them appropriately.

Teacher as Learner

1. When you come to Alaska, that structure (from the Lower 48) isn't here. You have to understand that and adapt to it...You are not here to change them. What I found, in my ninth year in Bush, Alaska, is that they tend to change me. I think that has to do with being culturally responsive and understanding that no matter where you're at, you're going to have kids that have a lot on

Table 12 (cont'd)

their plate. Sometimes it's more important to teach them coping skills or expression than Math. ... Math is really important and I get that, ...I learned great patience being a Bush, Alaska teacher. I think just being relevant to the students where ever they are, trying to

get them to see math in other places. I had been up here about three years. A girl came in and said, "Every time I see snow machine tracks now I think, 'Oh, my goodness. Those are parallel lines. Look, there's a transversal!'" It's just, it's changed my outlook on life. It's changed what I find valuable...

2. For me, it was getting to understand the community, getting myself out there, not just getting to know the community, but letting them know me and not being scared to share stuff about myself. They're just as interested about me, as I am about culture... Getting to know the community and getting involved, really helped because then you know who to talk to, you know how to bring them into the school...You have to be vulnerable in the sense that you're not always the expert on everything, you don't know everything ... But you just have to be vulnerable with them. It's okay not to know something and I think it takes some people a long time because they're like, "No, no, I'm the teacher and I should be the one that's teaching..."

Empathy

1. (A culturally responsive teacher) understands where they (students) come from, no matter where they are. Or tries to at least, and just accepts the students for who they are. I think my most inspirational teacher; I had was native at Mount Edgecumbe, and the other who was non-native was in my middle school years. And it's nothing to do with academics, but it was more like in her classroom I started to like who I was because she accepted who I was personally and I saw her accepting everybody else there too. I see it here too.... Everyone came together, and every teacher, they're very loving.
2. That it's (culturally responsive teaching) not so much the curricular piece that is important, and it's something to think about, but to be culturally responsive, you need to know students as individuals and to be able to respond to them in ways that you're really communicating that there's a mutual understanding that you understand that student's particular context. Personally, culturally, all those kinds of things.

Alaska Cultural Standards

1. If you're going to have standards, and the expectation is that these standards will be implemented, then there should be some checks and balances to ensure that it is happening. So, where are the checks and balances at the state level for these standards? We've put a lot of money into developing these standards - and, I would say, for the most part, you'd probably see more of it evident in smaller communities in rural areas than you would in urban areas. However, in the urban areas, I would say it's needed even more and I think it starts with the leadership.

Table 12 (cont'd)

2. I think the intent is good as far as the Alaska State Cultural Standards go. They do only scratch the surface. I do realize that but here's another thought to even challenge the institutional norm. I'm originally from here, this area right here. I've been working here for nearly 20 years as far as being a part of the school system. At what point is my work considered a part of the local culture versus the western culture? Because I do consider myself Yup'ik and I know for a fact the decisions I make influence what happens here. When do you stop labeling it a western educational system versus an educational system that has the element of incorporating some of the values from indigenous culture here?
-

Walking in Two Worlds (Western and Indigenous)

What I have had laid out as a descriptor, I do feel that is a clear illustration of the outcome ideal of a stable structure. Whether you apply that to people or communities or any other system. I don't quite feel like we're dialed in yet here. The biggest piece to complete that tetrahedron (A Yupiaq Worldview, Kawagley, 2006) for our school is the community. Finding ways to bridge the gap between the school and the community so that you approach it holistically and it's a symbiosis between one meeting the other where the school isn't greater than the community, the community isn't greater than the school. Supporting it so that the student has that foundation with both entities. That, to me, would complete that foundation so that, for instance, I need parental support, just like that I get parental support. I know that's not such in some other communities I've worked in.

High Expectations

I think that's changed (what it takes to be a responsive teacher), how I will define that has changed over time. I think it's come to be more about having high expectations and supporting kids to meet your expectations. I think our students often seem so behind with tests or their grade level or their reading level but they have a great capacity to learn. I don't know all the reasons why they get behind..... It turned my stomach, a few months ago I heard a teacher ... not from here. I heard a teacher say, "They just have too high of expectations. It's too much pressure on those kids." I was like, "No, our kids need to know that we believe they can accomplish great things." Then we need to do the work of helping them get there. I think that includes being culturally relevant like why does it matter? If it's not relevant to their lives it doesn't matter very much.

Students as Teachers

I think the belief in all students that they can succeed is at the very heart of that (culturally responsive teaching). Teaching students who they are and acknowledging what they bring into your classroom and that wealth of knowledge that each student brings to the classroom and that they could share with as teachers and with their peers.

The results of the survey indicate that teachers and principals see connections with local community, culture, history and place as a key practice to identify culturally responsive teaching. The frequency of responses about Teacher as Leader as well as Relationships and Empathy suggest that the need for teachers to respond to the instructional context through active learning as well as the interactions with students are critical to culturally responsive teaching.

4.2.4 Interview results from “What are the challenges to enacting culturally responsive teaching in public schools?”

In addition to describing the beliefs and practices of Culturally Responsive Teachers, interview subjects listed the “challenges and barriers” to culturally responsive teaching. These were aligned to some degree to the response to the same question on the Culturally Responsive Teaching survey, however, since the question was open ended the responses were more varied, and subjects often listed more than one. Table 13 presents the frequency of responses by category.

Table 13: Challenges and Barriers by Frequency of Response

Challenges for Culturally Responsive Teaching	n
Time, Scheduling, Communication	14
Lack of local, cultural knowledge (fear of making mistakes)	8
Mandated, scripted curriculum (lack of autonomy)	6
Pressures for Standardized Tests	5
District and State policies, regulations	3
Lack of Professional Development	3
Lack of quality resources or money	2
Total	41

Teacher and principal perceptions and understandings of Culturally Responsive Teaching drove their responses. The response to the question about the beliefs and practices of culturally responsive teachers is aligned with the responses to this question. If one of the key practices is to connect curriculum and instruction with local community, culture, history and place, it would require time to plan, time to communicate with community resources and other teachers. It would also place demands on the school schedule. Several teachers talked about

pressures to adhere to district and scripted curriculum materials and the pressures of standardized tests. Obviously, notions of “relationships” and “empathy” also reported in the interviews are not so time bound, or restricted by a lack of autonomy from district or state policies, regulations or testing. It is interesting the teachers and principals were aligned in their responses. There is a general consensus that culturally responsive teaching is a complex practice and belief system that evolves over time. There is some alignment with Question 11 from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, particularly for the top four responses to the open-ended interview questions. The top four challenges on the survey were: (a) Lack of training and resources (27%), (b) Pressure regarding testing (25%), (c) Lack of time / scheduling (21%), and (d) Lack of familiarity with local culture (14%). Figure 8 presents the responses to this survey question.

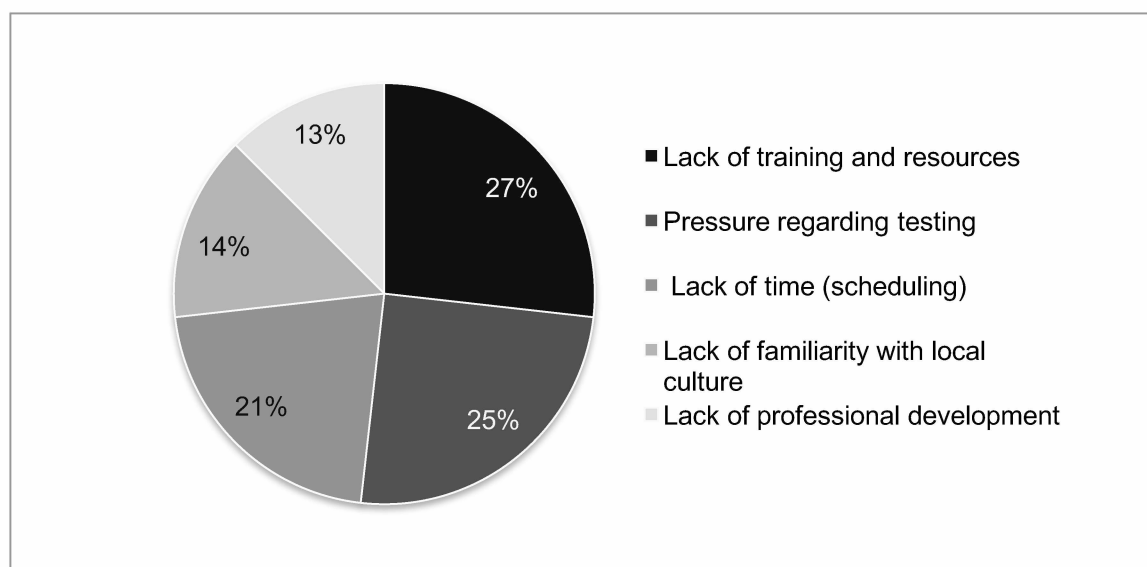


Figure 8: Responses to Question 11 from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey: Most significant challenges to implementing culturally responsive teaching

4.2.5 Interview results: “If this community and the parents of students in this school were to speak with one voice, what would they say are their expectations and hopes for graduates of this school system?”

One of the important considerations for culturally responsive teaching is understanding the expectations of the community for pre-K-12 education. In order for a school system to be culturally responsive, the goals and programming within the system must be aligned with the local community and culture(s). Although most interview subjects reported that the community

probably wouldn't speak with one voice, they reported a varied list of community/parent expectations for public schooling; Table 14 presents the responses.

Table 14: Community Expectations for Schools

Community Expectations for School	n
College/Post-Secondary	11
Cultural Knowledge	9
Employment	8
Either stay or return to the community	8
Good Person, Community Member	7
Have the Skills and Knowledge to Make Choices (Walk in Two Worlds)	6
Indigenous Language	6
Vocational Ed., Learn a trade	5
Be Happy	5
Core Community Values	4
Challenged in School Academically	3
High School Diploma	3
Total	75

4.2.6 Summary of results: Research question one.

1. The survey suggests a perception that the participating schools are generally in the range of “developing” to “applying” when it comes to implementing the three cultural standards (CA, CB and CE) according to six indicators from the Culture in the Classroom publication. Questions 1-6 which ask specifically about the six cultural standards scored means of 3.28 (developing) to 4.13 (applying).

2. Teachers and principals ranked “establishing rapport” as the most important practice for culturally responsive teaching, while zero respondents indicated developing culturally responsive units.

3. Teachers and principals are evenly split regarding the challenges for culturally responsive teaching: lack of training and resources (27%), pressure regarding testing (25%) and lack of time, scheduling (21%).

4. Teachers and principals mostly identify the “promise” of promising practices to be outside of the classroom: district programs, professional development opportunities, cultural

activities etc., there was little mention of culturally responsive teaching practices in core academic courses.

5. Teachers and principals perceive that the purpose of culturally responsive teaching is to engage students, to promote social/emotional well-being and confidence/self-efficacy, with the last two closely intertwined. It is important to note that teachers and principals in the study do not see academic achievement as a primary influence of culturally responsive teaching, reinforcing the notion that culturally responsive teaching is something separate from the development of academic skills and knowledge.

6. Twenty-one teachers and 10 principals participated in the onsite interviews focused on eight questions (Appendix D). The four most frequent responses by interview subjects regarding the “beliefs and practices of culturally responsive teachers” were: Local Connections 65%, Relationships 39%, Teacher as Learner 35% and Empathy 23%. Other responses included: Alaska Cultural Standards, Walking in Two Worlds, High Expectations, and Students as Teachers.

7. In the interviews, responses were aligned to some degree to the response to the same question (challenges to CRT) on the CRT survey. However, since the question was open ended, the responses were more varied, and subjects often listed more than one. The most frequent responses were: (a) Time, scheduling, communication, (b) Lack of local, cultural knowledge, (c) Mandated, scripted curriculum, and (d) Pressure for standardized tests.

8. Interview subjects reported a wide variety of community expectations for pre-K-12 public education (n=12). College/Post-Secondary and Cultural knowledge were the most frequent responses.

4.3 How is Culturally Responsive Teaching Implemented in Alaskan Middle Schools?

There are three sets of data that inform this question. First, the results of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey that examines six of the Alaska Cultural Standards. Secondly, the Classroom Observation data, that also examines these same standards through student and teacher indicators (evidence). And lastly, the teacher and principal interviews that present the complex beliefs and practices of culturally responsive teachers extending well beyond the six indicators of the standards that were represented in the survey and the classroom observation results. To summarize the results directly related to this question, there are three data points (among others) from these instruments that are relevant. First, are two questions from the

Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey. These questions explore the relationship between the Alaska Cultural Standards and the implementation of Culturally Responsive teaching in the broader sense. Question 7: To what degree do you agree with this statement: The Alaska Cultural Standards represent the critical practices and habits of mind for culturally responsive teaching? Figure 9 presents responses to Question 7.

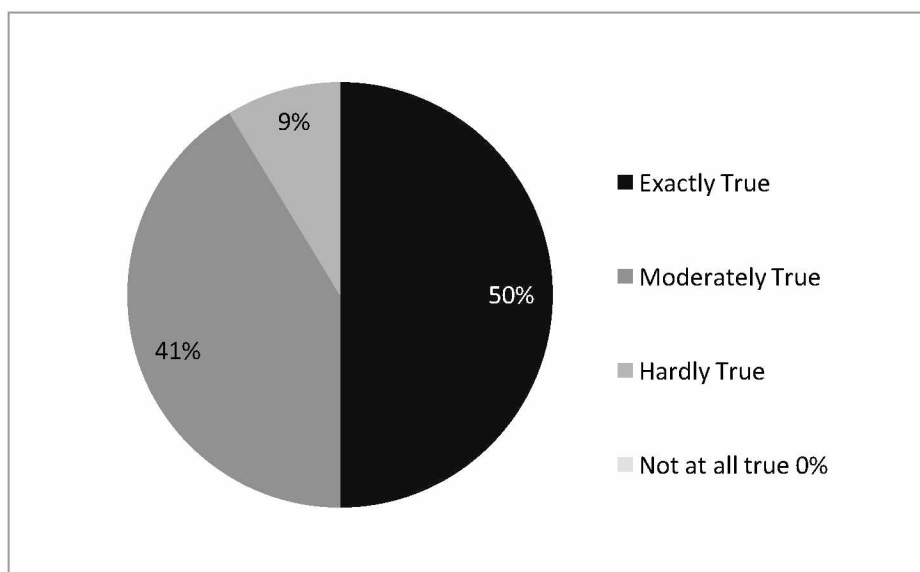


Figure 9: The Alaska Cultural Standards represent the critical practices and habits of mind for culturally responsive teaching.

Although the interviews and other survey responses suggest that beliefs and practices like establishing rapport and empathy, and building relationships with students are important to the identification of culturally responsive teaching, the fact that 91% of respondents believe that the cultural standards represent the critical practices and habits of mind for culturally responsive teaching suggest that most respondents equate the cultural standards with culturally responsive teaching to some degree. This notion is in alignment with the next question, where only 30% of the respondents reported as “exactly true” that the Alaska Cultural Standards were “widely implemented” in their schools. The 46% who reported that it was “moderately true” are probably suggesting that the standards are not “widely” implemented which would also be aligned with the first six questions which ask directly if teachers are implementing the six standards in their classrooms, and the majority of responses were either “developing” or “applying.” This would

also be in alignment with the observation data where 21 of 38 observations revealed no presence of the six standards.

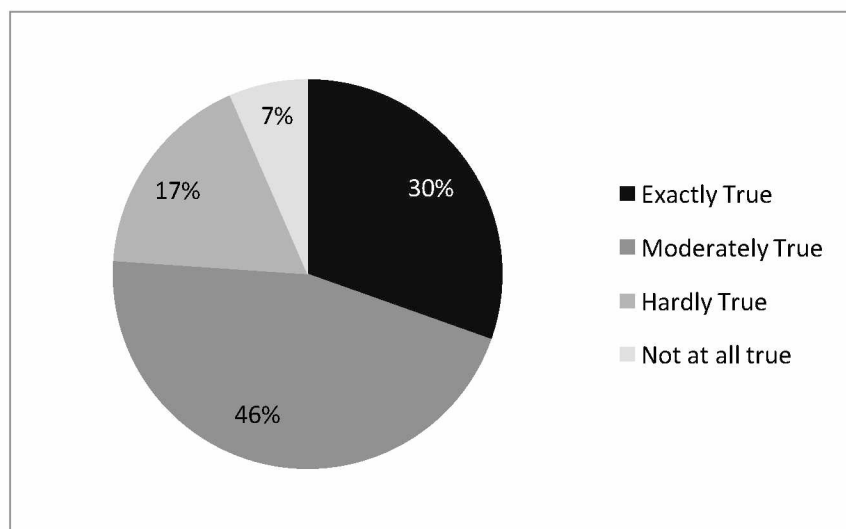


Figure 10: To what degree do you agree with this statement: The Alaska Cultural Standards are widely implemented in our school.

With only 30% of respondents reported that it is “exactly true” that the cultural standards are widely implemented in their school, it supports the notion that despite state board of education policies, and district efforts to include the standards in teacher evaluations, there is not widespread implementation. Since most teachers recognize that the implementation of the standards is expected by districts, the “politically correct” response would be “exactly true.” However, since the survey was anonymous and for research purposes only, it suggests that this is an accurate representation of the level of implementation.

4.3.1 Classroom observation results.

Also, in order to determine the level of implementation for the Alaska Cultural Standards specifically, recognizing that these standards are not inclusive of the practice of culturally responsive teaching, there is the classroom observation data. It is important to note that of 38 formal observations, using the iObservation tool, the cultural standards were *not* present in 21 classrooms (55%). All classrooms represented in this table were visited at least twice. The observations were scheduled with permission from the classroom teacher, they were not

spontaneous, unscheduled visits. Table 15 presents a breakdown of the classes where the standards were either present or not present.

Table 15: Presence of Alaska Cultural Standards

Types of classes where the cultural standards were present

Classes Observed	Not Present	Present
Core Classes (English/LA, Math, Science, Soc. Studies)	21	6
Indigenous Culture or Language Classes		5
Cultural Programs, Activities during class		6
	21	17

Although the observation data show that the standards were not present in 21 of 38 formal observations (55%), it does not mean that culturally responsive teaching was not happening in those classrooms. There were no false positives, in other words the classrooms where the standards were present were culturally responsive. However, there were also classrooms that were culturally responsive where the standards were not present. Table 15 also indicates that the majority of classrooms where the cultural standards were implemented were either indigenous culture or language classes, i.e. Inupiaq class in Point Lay or the Yuuyaraq “A Way of Being Human” course in Kongiginak. There were also programs like the Voices on the Land project at D’zantiki Heeni in Juneau where students created stop animation digital stories based on local places and traditional knowledge. Eleven of the 17 observations (65%) where the cultural standards were present were *not* core academic classes (e.g. English/LA, Math, Science, Social Studies). This reinforces the perception suggested in the survey that the primary influence of culturally responsive teaching is not academic achievement, as well as the notion that promising practices are separate from pedagogy in core academic classes. The relationship between the Alaska Cultural Standards and the identification and implementation of culturally responsive teaching will be analyzed in the next chapter.

For comparison, the schools were rating from one to three in terms of implementation of the standards based on the average scores on the observation scale. Table 16 presents the method for determining the rating levels. These results only indicate the degree of implementation of the six cultural standards. They do not reflect teacher effectiveness or the quality of instruction. Since there was such a large span in terms of the raw scores and the means, I created a rating

system based on the classroom observation data. Table 16 presents the three levels for the rating, according the mean scores for each school.

Table 16: Observation of Alaska Cultural Standards Rating Scale

Level of implementation: AK Cultural Standards	Observation Mean Scores	Rating	n schools
None	0	0	1
Minimal	1 - 6	1	5
Partial	7-10	2	1
Consistent	11 to 15	3	3

The results of the classroom observations are based on formal observations where a time was scheduled with the teacher in advance, and the classroom was observed for 45 to 75 minutes depending on the length of the class period. and described by student and teacher evidence detailed in the Culture in the Classroom: Indicators and Evidences for Evaluating Culturally Responsive Teaching using the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators (SERRC, 2015). These ratings took place in real time during the observations with a digital evaluation tool: iObservation®. Appendix F presents an example of the rating scale for Cultural Standard CA2: Supporting New Content with Cultural Connections. Extensive notes were taken during the observations. The observations were most often scheduled before an interview so that discussions could include the context of the classroom observation. There were also many informal observations where no numeric data were collected, only sequential notes regarding the classroom activities.

It is critical to point out that these observations for the research project, only looked at the implementation of the cultural standards. There were lively, engaged, challenging learning environments and activities where the standards were not present. In no way do these observations evaluate the quality of instruction. Instead, the observation rating scale clearly and systematically evaluated the implementation of the six indicators of the cultural standards. I observed both formally and informally, highly skilled, committed teachers who were not aware of the cultural standards, and/or did not implement them in their classrooms for a variety of reasons, as indicated on the CRT survey. The purpose of the observations was to determine the level of implementation of the cultural standards and to use these ratings as an indicator for

culturally responsive teaching. The observation ratings do not indicate whether culturally responsive teaching practices are taking place. There were classrooms that were culturally responsive, where teachers were differentiating instruction and teaching in culturally and developmentally appropriate ways for adolescents, where the standards were not present. These data also suggest that in general the standards were either present or not present by teacher. Although, the actual time spent in classrooms for formal observations was limited in the context of a complete school year, the triangulation of the observation data, the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey as well as the interviews with teachers and principals does provide a sense of the level of implementation, in terms of the cultural standards. In terms of a more holistic and expansive identification, this data was not as relevant. For all of the teachers and principals participating in the research, an information form consisting of basic demographic and professional data was completed. One question that is often asked about culturally responsive teaching, is if this practice is more often employed by teachers new to the profession, or is it a practice that develops over time, by more experienced teachers. This current study revealed no connection between culturally responsive teaching and years of service.

There was no relationship between the number of years in the classroom and ratings on the observation scale. The teachers who were observed were the same teachers who were interviewed for the research. Fifty percent of the teachers reported they received their teacher preparation in Alaska, and 50% reported they were prepared outside of Alaska. These observations took place during the fall (August through November) and spring (February through April) onsite visits. Teachers who were recommended by their principals were invited to participate in the observations. The response varied from school to school, but in general teachers were open and welcoming about the observations and interviews, especially during the spring visits after introductions in the fall. There was no relationship between the size of the schools and the mean scores on the classroom observation scale.

Table 17: Classroom Observation Scale

<i>Classroom Observation Scale Results</i>				
Schools by Code:	n	Total Scores	Means	CRT Obs. Rating
300	4	0	0.00	0
800	3	24	8.00	2

Table 17 (cont'd)

Schools by Code:	n	Total Scores	Means	CRT Obs. Rating
200	5	23	4.60	1
900	3	40	13.33	3
600	4	10	2.50	1
1000	4	20	5.00	1
400	4	12	3.00	1
700	3	10	3.33	1
100	4	48	12.00	3
500	4	47	11.75	3
Means	3.80	23.40	6.35	1.60

Note: The total scores are determined by teacher and student evidence scored on 6 indicators (criteria) on a five-point scale.

The results for the classroom observation scale show that the Alaska Cultural Standards were not present in 21 of 38 formal observations (55%). The results of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey showed that respondents indicated that the implementation of the Cultural Standards, were at the developing and applying stage, with very few instances of innovation. Since both instruments evaluated the same six cultural standards, it is not surprising that there is a relationship between the results for these measures. The results of both instruments suggest that implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards is not widespread.

4.3.2 Summary of results: Research question two.

1. The survey suggests a perception that the participating schools are generally in the range of “developing” to “applying” when it comes to implementing the three cultural standards (CA, CB and CE) according to six indicators from the Culture in the Classroom publication. Questions 1-6, which ask specifically about the six cultural standards scored means of 3.28 (developing) to 4.13 (applying).

2. Ninety one percent of respondents indicated that the cultural standards represent the “critical practices and habits of mind” for culturally responsive teaching as exactly or moderately true. This suggests that most respondents equate the cultural standards with culturally responsive teaching to some degree.

3. Only 30% of the respondents reported as “exactly true” that the Alaska Cultural Standards were “widely implemented” in their schools. The 46% who reported that it was

“moderately true” are probably suggesting that the standards are not “widely” implemented in their schools.

4. In no way do these observation ratings evaluate the quality of instruction. Instead, the observation rating scale systematically evaluated the implementation of the six cultural standards through evidence related to the standards.

5. Of 38 formal observations using the iObservation tool, the cultural standards were *not* present in 21 classrooms (55%). Eleven of the 17 observations (65%) where the cultural standards were present were not core academic classes: English/LA, Math, Science, Soc. Studies.

6. The results of the Classroom Observation Rating Scale and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey suggest that implementation of the Alaska Cultural Standards is not widespread.

4.4 How is Culturally Responsive Teaching Connected to Student Self-Efficacy in Alaskan Middle Schools?

There is one question from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey that directly informs this research question. Question 13 asked: How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? The response suggests that teachers and principals see the influence of culturally responsive teaching to primarily influence: (a) students’ attitudes towards school and learning (engagement, 46%); (b) students’ sense of well-being, (social/emotional actualization, 32%); and (c) Self-concept (as determined by confidence and self-efficacy, 18%). Figure 11 presents the responses to Question 13: How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? The responses to this question reflect teacher perceptions that the purpose of culturally responsive teaching is to engage students, to promote social/emotional well-being and confidence/self-efficacy, with the last two closely intertwined.

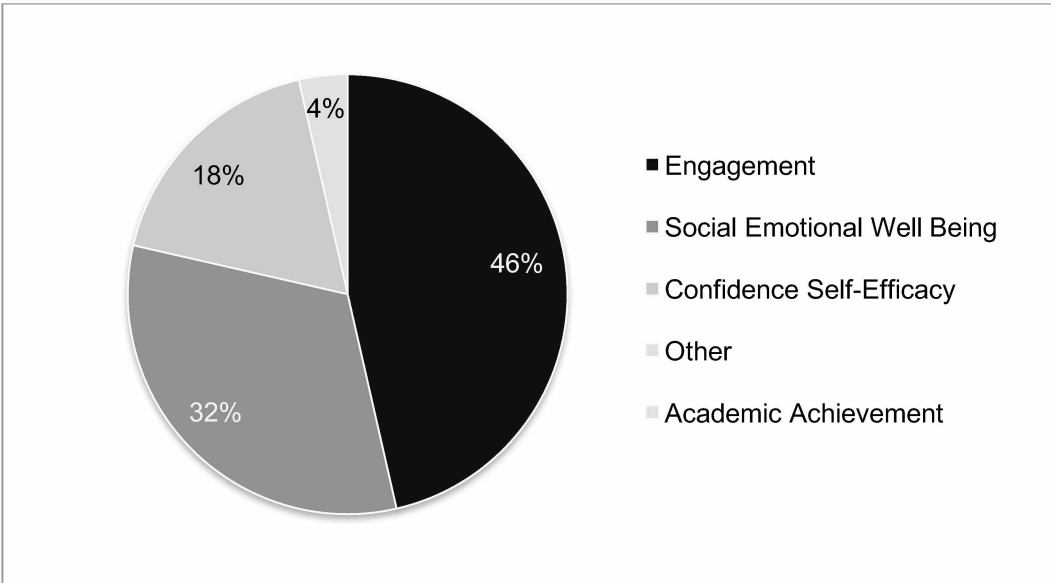


Figure 11: Responses to Question 13 from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

In order to unpack some of the complexity related to connections between culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy the results of the survey follow.

4.4.1 Student self-efficacy survey results.

The student self-efficacy survey that was used in this research is included in Appendix G. The survey consists of the General Efficacy Scale, an instrument that has been translated into more than 33 languages (10 questions), and three questions specifically related to students' perceptions of culture and schooling. All questions asked were rated on a four-point scale regarding the level to which participants agreed with the statement. The participants at each school varied according to the principal's direction in terms of classes and grade levels, as well as a teacher's willingness to participate. After receiving permission from the district office to conduct the research, (and when necessary approval from the school board), there was a conversation with the principal of each school. During the first site visit, after introductions to the staff, specific teachers agreed to participate. Because of the very different configurations of grade levels at the 10 schools, with two large middle schools with grades 6-8 only (201-500), four mid-size K-12 schools (101-200) and four small K-12 schools (<100), the number and age levels of the participating students varied. For instance, even though Sitka (Blatchley Middle School) was one of the larger schools, since two classes were selected to participate, the number of participants from the school is lower than Akiuk, which is a smaller school. Table 18

represents the participation at the various schools. Since all of the schools had greater than a 90% return rate for the parent consent forms, the number of respondents is very close to the number of participants in the study. With student migration and varied attendance, this table represents a snapshot of the enrollment in the spring of 2017 when the student survey was conducted. Table 19 presents the results of the Student Self-Efficacy Survey.

Table 18: Respondents to the Student Self-Efficacy Survey by School and Grade Level

School	N	Grade Levels
Juneau	55	6
Sitka	18	6,7,8
Kong	32	7,8
Nenana	12	5,6
Napaskiak	19	7,8
Pt. Lay	19	7,8
Akiuk	34	6,7,8,9
Huslia	13	6,7,8
STrEaM (ANC)	25	7,8
Anderson	7	6,7,8
Total	234	

Note: Juneau and Sitka are large middle schools with only grades 6-8.

Table 19: Student Self-Efficacy Survey Results, n=240

Questions	Not at All True %	Hardly True %	Moderately True %	Exactly True %	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	2.05	10.66	59.43	27.87	3.13	0.67
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	9.02	35.25	45.49	10.25	2.57	0.80
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	2.87	15.98	53.28	27.87	3.06	0.74
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	4.51	18.03	54.92	22.54	2.96	0.77
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations	5.74	24.59	48.36	21.31	2.85	0.82
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	2.05	10.66	47.13	40.16	3.25	0.73

Table 19 (cont'd)

Questions	Not at All True %	Hardly True %	Moderately True %	Exactly True %	Mean	Standard Deviation
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	4.92	24.59	49.59	20.90	2.87	0.80
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions	3.69	22.54	46.31	27.46	2.98	0.81
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	4.10	18.44	43.03	34.43	3.08	0.83
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	3.28	18.03	49.59	29.10	3.04	0.78
11. My culture is respected at school.	3.28	11.89	28.28	56.56	3.38	0.82
12. I'm proud of my culture when I'm at school.	2.46	8.20	21.72	67.62	3.55	0.75
13. At school, we learn about local culture and history.	1.64	9.84	31.15	57.38	3.44	0.74

For all schools, all students, the mean for the student self-efficacy survey was 3.08. Question 2: “If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want” had the lowest mean score: (2.57). Question 12 had the highest mean score: “I’m proud of my culture when I’m at school.” (3.54). Bandura’s social cognitive theory suggests that human functioning arises from interactions among three primary factors: (a) personal factors (e.g. cognitions, emotions); (b) behavioral factors; and (c) environmental or situational conditions (Bandura, 1986). There are many, many factors influencing self-efficacy for adolescents. However, for Question 2, it seems logical that personal factors would largely influence a students’ perception of that question (dealing with opposition). Whereas for Question 12, regarding pride in culture at school, it is reasonable to assume that the beliefs and practices of teachers regarding students’ culture would influence students’ perception of that question (environmental or situational conditions). Figure 12 presents mean scores by question on the Student Self-Efficacy Survey.

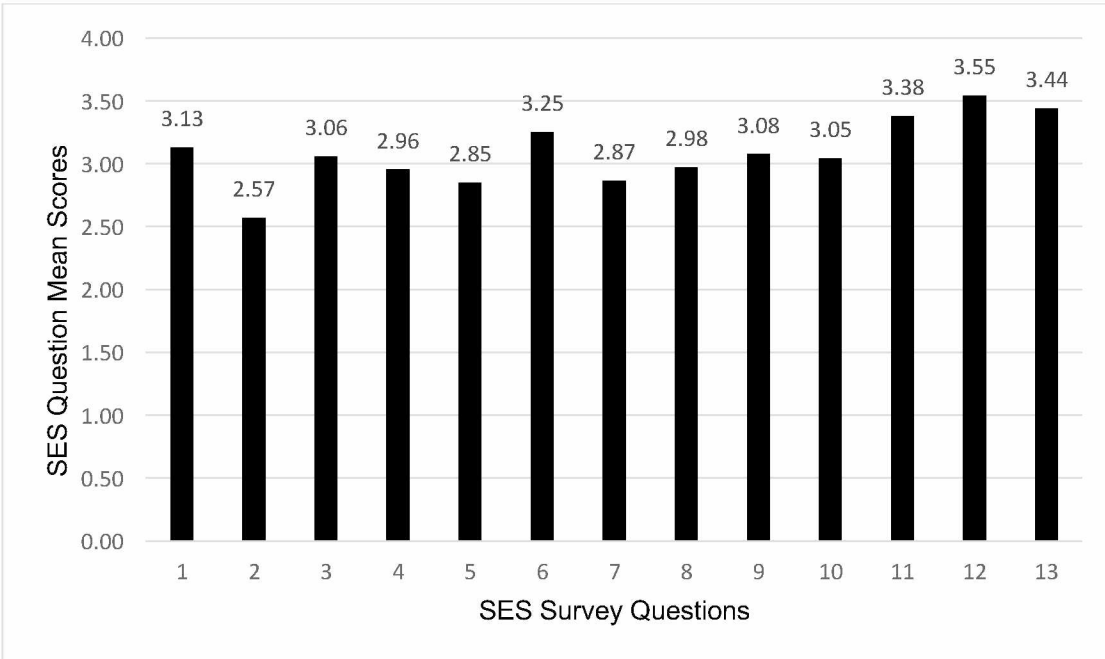


Figure 12: Mean scores by question on the Student Self-Efficacy Survey.

Although both of the larger schools (Sitka and Juneau) scored above the median, with means of 3.25 and 3.21 respectively, there was no significant variance between the mean scores on the student self-efficacy survey and school size. Since the survey asks students to respond with degrees of affirmation (the degree to which a statement is true), generally the higher the score, the higher the level of self-efficacy. With the median for all questions at 3.0 (moderately true), and with very few (less than 5% of responses) at the 1.0 or “not at all true” level, it suggests that when middle school students at all of these schools evaluate themselves in terms of self-efficacy they rate themselves as mostly “moderately” efficacious or confident. Considering the very different contexts for each of these schools in terms of the socio-economic levels of the community and the diversity or homogeneity regarding the local culture and ethnicity, it is remarkable that the students responded in such similar ways to the survey.

That said, the three schools that scored the highest: Sitka, Nenana, and Juneau are all relatively “urban” in terms of the Alaskan context. The populations of Juneau and Sitka are the largest of any of the communities where the research was conducted. Nenana, although it’s a small community, is on the road system and less than an hour’s drive from Fairbanks. (Anderson is also on the road system; however, it is a very small school). Nenana is also a larger school

because of the Nenana Student Living Center, where students from rural communities (grades 9-12) live and attend school in Nenana.

It is also important to consider the enrollment by ethnicity regarding the self-efficacy responses by school. The three schools that scored the highest mean scores: Sitka (3.25), Juneau (3.21), and Nenana (3.21) also have significant populations of Caucasian students: 46%, 46%, and 24% respectively, whereas the three communities that scored the lowest were among the five schools with more than 94% Alaska Native students. To look more broadly at all of the schools, the schools with the higher percentage of Alaska Native students had a significantly lower mean score for the SES survey: 2.99 compared to a mean of 3.17 for the other schools. Although race and privilege should be considered in terms of self-efficacy, there is a correlation between these five sites and the CRT survey.

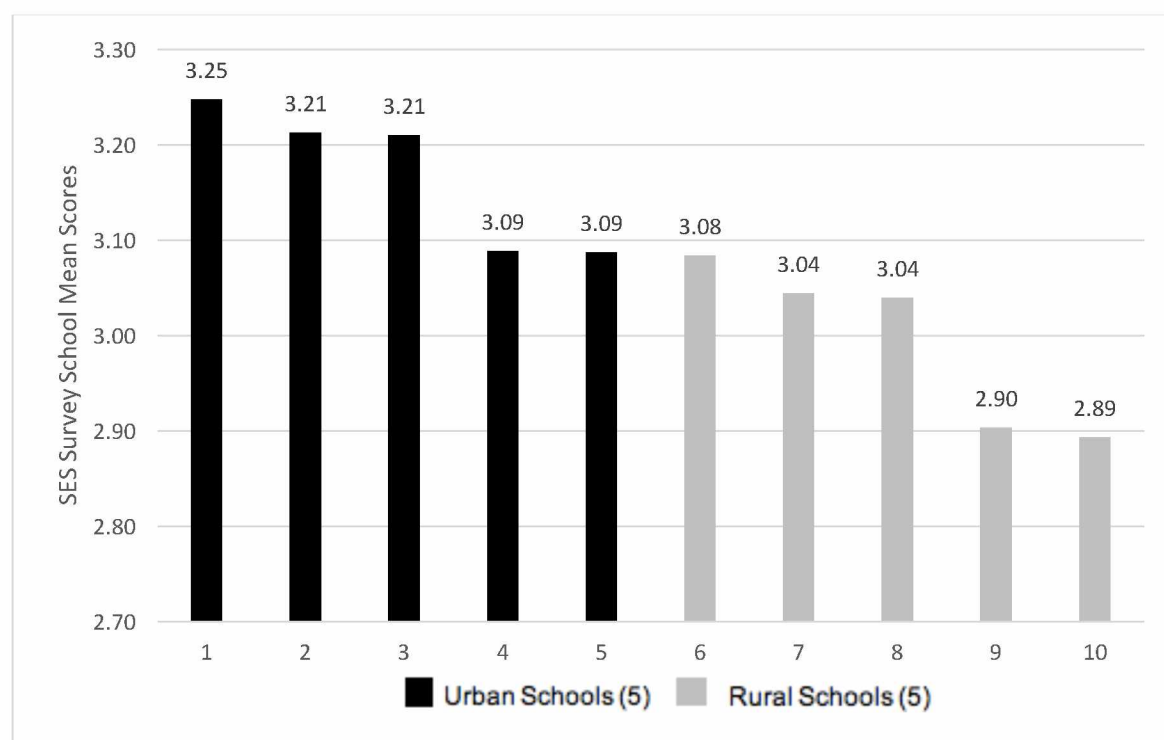


Figure 13: Student Self-Efficacy Survey: Mean Scores by School

This chart shows that the rural schools, with more than 94% Alaska Native/American Indian populations, scored lower (2.99 average mean score) versus the Urban Schools (3.17 average mean score). There are many factors that contribute to student self-efficacy for middle school students. These factors will be discussed as part of the analysis of the results in the next chapter. The means for both groups were close to the “Moderately True” response (3). However,

these results suggest that the rural student responses were closer to the “Hardly True” response (2), and the urban student responses leaned more towards the “Exactly True” response (4). It is not a huge difference, except the fact that there wasn’t one rural school that had a mean score higher than the lowest mean score for an urban school.

In a comparison of the Student Self-Efficacy Survey and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey for all 10 schools there was not a significant relationship. The relationship between the two measures is not predictable. This is partially due to the fact that the two CRT surveys did not establish enough separation between schools. With the five point Likert scale, the majority of responses were between 3.00 (developing) or 4.00 (applying) across schools. In order to create more separation and to more closely identify the implementation of the indicators of the cultural standards the survey should be revised, or another instrument developed.

4.4.2 Summary of results: Research question three.

1. Question 13 on the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey asked: How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? The response suggests that teachers and principals see the influence of culturally responsive teaching to primarily influence: (a) students’ attitudes towards school and learning (engagement, 46%); (b) Students sense of well-being (social/emotional actualization, 32%); and (c) Self-concept (as determined by confidence and self-efficacy, 18%).

2. Two of the six indicators for the cultural standards evaluated in the Classroom Observations related to engagement: CA4: Student Engagement with Cultural Connections and CB2: Engaging Students with Authentic Local Resources. Of the observations where the indicators (cultural standards) were present, these two indicators received the highest average scores: 1.60 and 1.33 on the five-point scale.

3. With the median for all questions at 3.00 (moderately true), and with very few (less than 5% of responses) at the 1.00 or “not at all true” level, it suggests that when middle school students at all of these schools evaluate themselves in terms of self-efficacy they rate themselves as mostly “moderately” efficacious or confident.

4. To look more broadly at all of the schools, the schools with the higher percentage of Alaska Native (>94%) students had a significantly lower mean score for the SES survey: 2.99 compared to a mean of 3.17 for the other schools.

4.5 Akiuk Memorial School: A Closer Look

The purpose of this research is not to make value judgments about whether or not schools are culturally responsive. For that reason, the research often refers to schools by codes and avoids identifying teachers by name. However, Akiuk Memorial School enacted a perspective and a position towards cultural responsiveness as a rural school situated in a Yup'ik community that was different from other schools. In Chapter Five there will be focused narrative that illuminates the research in this one school. Here are the results specific to Akiuk that will be the basis for discussion in the next chapter. These results will not be compared with other schools in the study.

4.5.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey.

The instructional staff at Akiuk Memorial School was comprised of 10 teachers (certified and non-certified). All were invited to participate in the online Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey. Six of ten (60%) responded. This was the second highest response rate of any of the schools. The responses to three of the questions were particularly interesting for Akiuk. First, this was the only school that responded with a unified voice (100%) that “Culturally responsive teaching influences student self-efficacy and success in school” was “exactly true.” The mean for the six teachers responded was 4.00. This compares to the mean for the rest of the teachers participating in the survey 2.20. In other words, the majority of respondents felt that this statement was hardly or moderately true. Secondly, on the first question, 83% (five) of the six teachers responding indicated that they are applying Cultural Standard CA2 “integrating and connecting traditions, customs, values and practices when interacting with new content.” Figure 15 shows the response to Question 1 for the Akiuk Instructional staff only.

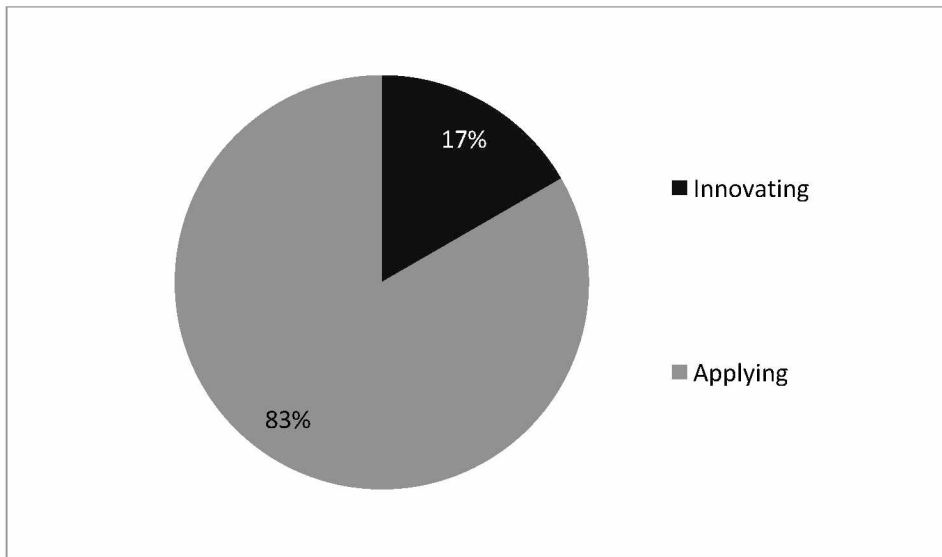


Figure 14: Responses by Akiuk Instructional Staff to Question 1

This compared to all of the participants in the survey who had a more varied response to the question indicated a lower level of implementation across all of the sites. This distribution is more typical of all the responses to the questions inquiring about the cultural standards, with the majority (85%) of the respondents indicating that they are either developing or applying the standards. Figure 15 shows the response to Question 1 for all respondents to the survey (Except Akiuk).

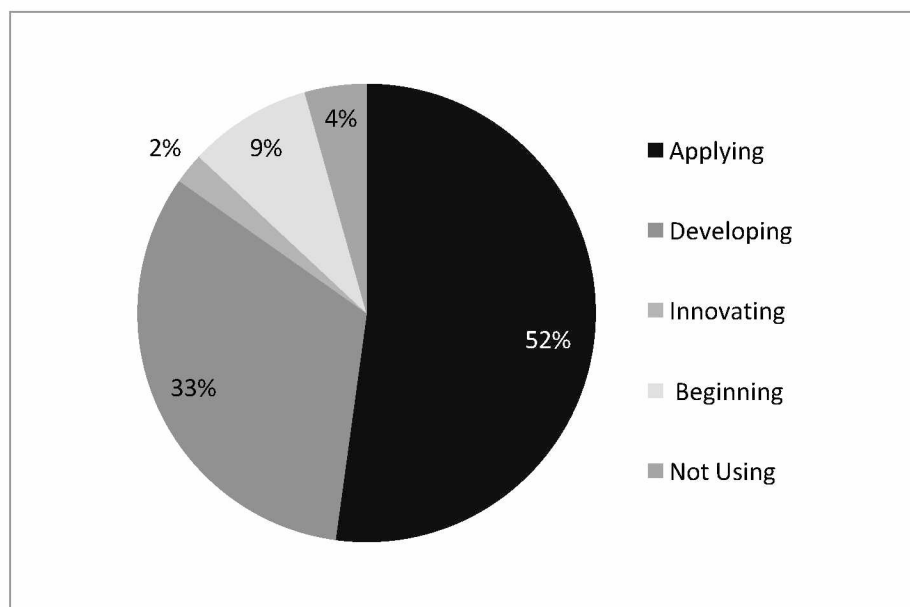


Figure 15: Responses by All Respondents to Question 1 (Except Akiuk)

4.5.2 Student Self-Efficacy Survey.

Among rural schools, Akiuk scored the highest mean for the Student Self-Efficacy survey (3.08), although the variance between the lowest mean score (2.89) and the highest (3.08) was limited. The last three questions on the Student Self-Efficacy Scale were added to the General Efficacy Scale to see if there was separation between the results of this survey and culturally responsive teaching survey, or the classroom observation data. However, the schools are reported in similar ways. For Akiuk, 84.6% indicated that “My culture is respected at school” was either “exactly true” (61.5%) or “moderately true” (23.1%). There were similar results to Question 12, where 92.3% indicated that “I’m proud of my culture when I’m at school” was either “exactly true” (69.2%) or “moderately true” (23.1%). The results for the last question 13: “At school, we learn about local culture and history” was identical to Question 12. The responses to these last questions suggest strongly that the middle school students in Akiuk have a positive perception of the role of their culture in the school.

4.5.3 Classroom observations.

Because of state mandated testing during the spring site visit, there were only three formal observations at Akiuk in three different middle school classrooms. There were also several informal observations that occurred during the fall and spring site visits. It was these observations as well as the interviews that instigated the closer look at Akiuk. The school and classroom environments were different than the other rural schools and the urban schools participating in the study. This will be discussed more in Chapter Five, but an important result of the classroom observations was the notion that this school was operating under a different set of guiding principles and practices. In terms of the classroom observation data, Akiuk had the highest overall average in the evaluation of the implementation of the six cultural standards, 13.3 across three formal observations, out of a total possible score of 24, with the standards rated on a five-point scale, with the first rating of “not using” resulting in a zero score. This average reflects the overall results for all of the schools, that the standards were either present, or not during the observations. This average suggests that there was widespread implementation of the six standards, particularly at the developing and applying levels. However, the next chapter will also discuss the relationship between the observation data, and a more holistic and complex definition of culturally responsive teaching than the six cultural standards indicate. The ratings for the

observation data were based on the overall average scores for the observations, presented previously in Table 18. Akiuk was one of three schools with the highest rating of 3.

4.5.4 Teacher and principal interviews.

There are anonymous excerpts from the interviews presented in this results section. However, with permission, the following excerpt from the interview with Christina Powers, principal of Akiuk Memorial school presents a departure from what is emerging as orthodoxy regarding the Alaska Cultural Standards and notions of culturally responsive teaching.

Table 20: Interview Excerpt Collaborative Inquiry-Based Approach

A Collaborative, Inquiry-based Approach

I think it's (culturally responsive teaching) not defined well in our cultural standards or in the definition. I don't think the state of Alaska's come out with anything that characterizes what I've seen. Beyond helping your students feel welcome in the classroom and respecting that people come from different cultures...I recognize where I am right now it seems easy to say, "Well, we're immersed in one culture. This very specific culture that we have," and so being culturally responsive means that you're going to have elders come into the classroom, and you're going to talk about the history that's here, you're going to support timelines and language structures and at the same time validate them. But, say that there's an academic English and a non-academic English. Those sorts of things would all support being culturally responsive, but for me it's always sat uncomfortably... because I think you define your culture if it's going to survive.

Last year for example, with our hallway theme, we talked about, one big theme that was going to carry us through the year. We're going to be culturally responsive, and what does that mean? Ultimately in discussions with staff and trying to figure it out...The hallway theme was: What does it mean to be Yup'ik living in Kasigluk, going to school at Akiuk Memorial School? We spent all year defining what it means as an individual. The themes were things like: What is your name sake? Who were you named after? Why were you named after them? What are some of their hobbies or things that they enjoyed? Do you have similarities? Do you have differences? We had another theme that was based on Nunacuaq, the former location of Kasigluk. We took a field trip over there. We had some elders speak to us about what it was like to live there. Then there were some Venn diagrams as people came back and asked ... What was life like in Nunacuaq versus what it's like for us in Kasigluk (Akiuk)?

This will be discussed more in the next chapter, but suffice it to say that Akiuk developed a collaborative, inquiry-based process for not just culturally responsive teaching, but for

working with the community to collaboratively define culture in a way that was dynamic and evolving. This approach and ideological construct were present in the classroom observations, as well as the other interviews.

4.5.5 School Climate and Connectedness Survey.

The Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB), in partnership with the American Institutes for Research conduct the Annual School Climate and Connectedness survey of students and staff. Six of the 10 research sites participated. With permission from the school districts, AASB provided the school specific data for these six sites. The rural and urban schools are presented anonymously for comparison purposes only.

Table 21: School Climate and Connectedness Survey

Survey Item	Akiuk	Rural Site	Urban Site	State Average
Caring Others	3.71	3.36	3.59	3.71
Definition: Caring Others reflects the level of caring and support that students received at school.				
High Expectations	4.33	4.09	4.12	4.18
Definition: <i>High Expectations reflects student perceptions of their own academic expectations as well as those of adults in their school and community.</i>				
Peer Climate	3.35	3.18	3.08	3.23
Definition: <i>Peer Climate reflects students' perceptions of how respectful and helpful students are.</i>				
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)	2.97	2.99	2.96	3.00
Definition: <i>SEL reflects self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and good decision making.</i>				
Community Support	88%	80%	77%	75%
Definition: Student-community engagement can benefit both schools and communities. The results presented show the extent to which students are involved in their communities, and the extent to which students feel supported by their communities.				

Note: The survey respondents for this table were students in grades 6-12 only.

The purpose for presenting this data isn't to determine significance statistically, but to show the relationship between the perception of Akiuk students in grades 6-12 and one urban and one rural school participating in this study, and the state average. Akiuk students rated (a) Caring Others, (b) High Expectations, (c) Peer Climate, (d) Social and Emotional Learning, and (e) Community Support at levels generally higher than the comparison schools and the state average.

4.5.6 Summary of results.

1. Among rural schools, Akiuk scored the highest mean for the Student Self-Efficacy survey (3.08), although the variance between the lowest mean score (2.89) and the highest (3.08) was limited.

2. For Akiuk, 84.6% indicated that "My culture is respected at school" was either "exactly true" (61.5%) or "moderately true" (23.1%). There were similar results to Question 12, where 92.3% indicated that "I'm proud of my culture when I'm at school" was either exactly true (69.2%) or moderately true (23.1%). The results for the last question, 13: "At school, we learn about local culture and history" was identical to Question 12.

3. On the CRT survey, six of 10 instructional staff from Akiuk (60%) responded. This was the highest response rate of any of the schools. Akiuk was the only school that responded with a unified voice (100%) that "Culturally responsive teaching influences student self-efficacy and success in school" was "exactly true." The mean for the six teachers responded was 4.00. This compares to the mean for the rest of the teachers participating in the survey: 2.20. In other words, the majority of respondents at the other sites felt that this statement was hardly or moderately true.

4. Akiuk had the highest overall average in the measurement of the implementation of the six cultural standards through the classroom observations, 13.3 across three formal observations, out of a total possible score of 24 per observation. The ratings for the observation data were based on the overall average scores for the observations. Akiuk was one of three schools with the highest rating of 3.

5. In the teacher and principal interviews at Akiuk, there was a stance or perspective towards culturally responsive teaching that was unique among respondents. The comments from the principal are characterized as a "collaborative, inquiry-based approach" to culturally responsive teaching (and schooling).

6. On the school climate and connectedness survey conducted by the Alaska Association of School Boards, Akiuk students in grades 6-12 scored at levels generally higher than the comparison schools and the state average in the following areas, relevant to this study: (a) Caring Others, (b) High Expectations, (c) Peer Climate, (d) Social and Emotional Learning, and (e) Community Support

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The results discussed in this chapter should be viewed through the lens of the complex and varied context of Alaskan schools. Middle School students living and attending school in rural, mostly indigenous communities have a very different worldview and experience in K-12 schooling than students attending the larger, more diverse schools in the more urban settings. This context also includes the composition of the instructional staff. There is a perception among educators in Alaska that culturally responsive teaching may provide a vehicle for closing the achievement gap between indigenous and Caucasian student populations.

This research project was driven both by a desire to contribute to the academic discourse about education in Alaska, as well as a personal quest to make sense of teaching and learning with middle school students in Alaska. After more than 30 years working in Alaskan public education, I saw a critical need to systematically examine culturally responsive teaching in Alaskan middle schools, to better understand a practice and approach that is understood and implemented in very different ways. Adolescence is the critical age when students are making decisions about their identity and their futures. Over the years, I have seen many trends, programs, initiatives, and approaches move through Alaskan classrooms. As I write, I am on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus, the very spot where I was hired for my first teaching job in Nunapitchuk, 32 years ago this month. Although this research will not present evidence for the “silver bullet,” the magic potion that will cure all of the deficiencies and challenges in Alaskan public education, it does move the conversation forward in terms of effective teaching and schooling for middle school students, both in rural communities and students attending schools on the road system. The study also defines “culturally responsive teaching” in the diverse Alaskan context in tangible and practical language that should be useful for educators. The results present an accurate snapshot of the level of implementation of culturally responsive teaching, as defined by the Alaska Cultural Standards for educators. Lastly, it explores connections between culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy. Although the results do not show a significant impact as it relates to culturally responsive teaching, the results do move our collective understanding of both culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy.

5.2 How Do Teachers Identify Culturally Responsive Teaching?

In order to answer this question, the relationship between the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators, as they are represented in the *Culture in the Classroom* publication (SERRC, 2015) and how teachers identify and define culturally responsive teaching needs to be examined, because they are not the same. The answer to this research question would be much simpler to present if educators in Alaska perceived these standards as one and the same with culturally responsive teaching. Through an analysis and discussion of the results of the culturally responsive teaching survey as it relates to the six indicators for the cultural standards and teacher and principal comments regarding culturally responsive teaching, we will examine the perceptions of “promising practices” as well as “challenges or barriers” to culturally responsive teaching, as these results are helpful in determining how teachers identify culturally responsive teaching. Next, we will look at the results of the classroom observations to discuss how those results inform this question. The analysis and discussion of these results lead to a definition and understanding of culturally responsive teaching that is more complex, more holistic, and more nuanced than the standards documents (both the implementation guide and the *Culture in the Classroom* publication) suggest.

5.2.1 The relationship between the Alaska Cultural Standards and teacher identification of culturally responsive teaching.

The standards and indicators found in Cultural Standards A-E are used in *Culture in the Classroom: Indicators and Evidences for Evaluating Culturally Responsive Teaching Using the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators* (SERRC, 2015). These indicators and evidences were the basis for evaluation using the iObservation tool and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey (Appendix C). The standards focus on connections to the local environment, culture, and community resources; Cultural Standard C "Culturally-responsive educators participate in the community events and activities in appropriate and supportive ways", was not included in the *Culture in the Classroom* publication, because the standard could not be evaluated in the classroom. Standard D was also not evaluated using the iObservation tool for the classroom observations because communication and interaction with parents was not measurable and observable during a classroom observation. Cultural Standard E, also known as the “equity standard” focuses on high expectations for all students.

There are several results from the research that are relevant to this question regarding how teachers identify culturally responsive teaching. First, teachers and principals were asked about the level of implementation regarding the six indicators. The survey suggests a perception that the participating schools are generally in the range of “developing” to “applying” when it comes to implementing the three cultural standards (CA, CB and CE) according to six indicators from the Culture in the Classroom publication. Questions 1-6, which ask specifically about the six cultural standards, scored means of 3.28 (developing) to 4.13 (applying).

So, there is recognition among respondents that these three standards are present in classrooms in terms of the six indicators. However, even with the expanded definition and scope of the cultural standards that is presented with consideration of all of the standards (A-E in Tables 24 and 25), teachers identify other practices as indicators of culturally responsive teaching. Throughout the survey results and the interviews, it was clear that respondents agreed the indicators are reflective of culturally responsive teaching, there was no argument that the standards, or indicators are not important considerations in a definition of culturally responsive teaching. However, the results suggest that the indicators and the standards are not inclusive of a more complex definition. For instance, teachers and principals ranked “establishing rapport” as the most important practice for culturally responsive teaching (50%) of respondents, while only 21% selected “making cultural connections” which is one of the guiding principles, if not the most significant, for the Alaska Cultural Standards. The results of the interviews present a more complex identification of culturally responsive teaching.

Thirty-one teachers and principals participated in the onsite interviews focused on eight questions (Appendix D). The four most frequent responses by interview subjects regarding the “beliefs and practices of culturally responsive teachers” were: Local Connections (65%), Relationships (39%), Teacher as Learner (35%), and Empathy (23%). Other responses included: Alaska Cultural Standards, Walking in Two Worlds, High Expectations, and Students as Teachers.

5.2.2 Relationships and empathy.

Cultural Standard E, Indicator CE3 states: “The educator demonstrates value and respect for all students of all cultures and challenges them to strive for educational excellence.” Respect and high expectations (challenging) students are components of establishing rapport, however establishing positive, trusting working relationships with students goes beyond these indicators,

and the language of the standard. The two excerpts from interviews, the first by an urban principal and the second from a rural teacher, extend and articulate the importance and multi-dimensional aspects of the kinds of relationships that are a critical component of culturally responsive teaching. Table 22 presents two interview excerpts from the Relationships category.

Table 22: Interview Excerpt Relationships

Relationships

However, the thing that it (culturally responsive teaching) keeps coming down to...is the social and emotional needs of our students and the cultural aspects of that...What does it mean to be identifying and addressing the social-emotional needs of our kids? The only way that is successful...is by having relationships, quality relationships with students." Whenever I ask students, I ask them a lot. "Hey, what's your favorite class?" They always say, "It's Mr. or Mrs. so and so." They don't say it's Science. They don't say it's Math. They name the teacher. They are not doing that to indicate it's not about the subject but in their mind, the class is the teacher. The class is not the subject. The class is the teacher.

Epecially, living in such a small community, we are a family, these are our kids, we have them for four or five years at a time, and we see them grow up, and so they really do become a part of our family. You have to help them understand the problems that are going on in their life and how to handle them appropriately.

An editorial comment is necessary here. In the big picture of teacher development and evaluation in the dynamic cultural context of classrooms, schools and communities, standards projects, not just limited to culturally responsive teaching, but also evaluation systems like those developed by Danielson and Marzano (Danielson, 2001; Marzano, 2012) are *deeply* Western-styled constructs of a belief system that relies on individual versus collective wisdom and knowledge. The intent of these systems, including the Culture in the Classroom tool is to quantify teaching and learning in order to separate individual teachers in terms of their competence and to provide feedback for growth. I will say unequivocally that these standards and indicators are a huge step forward in our understanding of culturally responsive teaching and effective teaching in the larger sense. However, as it is with all of these evaluation systems, I find the absence of uniquely and distinctly human traits: emotions and actions, to be absent. In the first example above, anyone who spends time in schools, especially middle schools, has

experienced situations where students equate the class with the teacher. In their minds (and hearts) they are not separate. And, in the second quote “we are a family, these are our kids,” I can’t imagine what an “indicator” or “evidence” would look like for this critical aspect of culturally responsive teaching and schooling. Not only do evaluation tools like this attempt to standardize complex activities that are by nature idiosyncratic, they also create false separations and distinctions in order to quantify criteria. If a Teacher Evaluation tool were to be developed based on the categories of responses from the interviews, there would be a standard and indicators for Relationships. There would also be a separate standard and indicator for Empathy.

In Table 23 a rural teacher and a rural principal discuss the importance of mutual understanding that goes beyond high expectations and respect.

Table 23: Interview Excerpt Empathy

Empathy

(A culturally responsive teacher) understands where they (students) come from, no matter where they are. Or tries to at least, and just accepts the students for who they are. I think my most inspirational teacher; I had was native at Mount Edgecumbe, and the other who was non-native was in my middle school years. And it's nothing to do with academics, but it was more like in her classroom I started to like who I was because she accepted who I was personally and I saw her accepting everybody else there too. I see it here too.... Everyone came together, and every teacher, they're very loving.

The pressing need for standardization, quantification, and evaluation that separates teachers and students in terms of competence, means that basic human needs like acceptance and to be loved must be separated from the instrumentation. In terms of this research question, how teachers identify culturally responsive teaching, the argument can be made that the relationships and interactions between teachers and students are at least as important as cultural connections. This is what a principal was referring to with this comment: “I think the intent is good as far as the Alaska State Cultural Standards go. They do only scratch the surface.” If the intention is to evaluate and quantify, it is the surface level behaviors that are the most readily observed and measured.

5.2.3 Culturally responsive teaching and a teacher's "stance".

Cultural Standard C states: "Culturally-responsive educators participate in community events and activities in appropriate and supportive ways." The following statement precedes the indicators in the *Culture in the Classroom* publication:

Although this standard isn't part of an educator's evaluation because it isn't observable in the classroom, it is the cornerstone standard. All four of the other cultural standards depend upon the educator building a knowledge base about their students and developing meaningful relationships within the community so the educator is perceived as a contributing member who respectfully gleans knowledge about the students' "place". (SERRC, 2015)

I think this statement is aligned with the comments from educators in the interviews. It is unfortunate that because of the constraints of the evaluation tool, that the "cornerstone" standard isn't evaluated. The three indicators listed below are generally considered to be best practice, especially for educators in rural communities. For urban communities, even small communities on the road system, there is often more than one distinct community, so to become an active member of *the* community is more challenging. Table 24 lists the cultural indicators for Standard C.

Table 24: Cultural Indicators for Standard C

Cultural Indicators	
CC1	Become active members of the community in which they teach and make positive and culturally appropriate contributions to the well-being of that community.
CC2	Exercise professional responsibilities in the context of local cultural traditions and expectations.
CC3	Maintain a close working relationship with and make appropriate use of the cultural and professional expertise of their co-workers from the local community.

Again, the results of the research, both the survey and the interviews, clearly demonstrated it is critical that teachers are active learners in the community. What is missing from this standard, and the standards as a whole is what Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle refer to as the teacher's "stance."

We offer the term stance to describe the positions teachers and others who work together take toward knowledge and its relationships to practice. We use the metaphor of stance to suggest both orientational and positional ideas... as well as the intellectual activities and perspectives over time. In this sense, the metaphor is intended to capture the ways we stand, the ways we see, and the lenses we see through. Teaching is a complex activity that occurs within webs of social, historical, cultural and political significance...
(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 249)

The notion of an educator's stance not only applies to Standard C and educators as active learners in the communities they serve, but is also relevant in terms of the relationships educators build within their classrooms and communities, as well as the social and political stance they take within schools and communities.

When educators believe that the school is “a family” and the students are “our kids” or, when a teacher describes their stance in the community as “vulnerable” they are commenting to some degree on positions of power and privilege, reflecting on their own sociocultural consciousness as well as the “stance” of the students and families in the communities they serve. Several teachers and principals commented on the importance of entering the classroom, the school and community with an open heart and open mind: “And so... multiple ways of knowing and looking at the world are valid and have value. And that openness, acceptance, an open-mind, open heart, the ability to embrace different people of different cultures and see them as human and build relationships” (anonymous principal). This is the critical “stance” that was often advocated in the interviews. Another teacher mentioned this positioning and essential openness: “come in with open ears, and proceed with a loving cultural connection, rather than a supremacist dictate.” As critical as Standard C is for teachers, particularly teachers living and teaching in a cross-cultural context, the stance that they bring to the active learning is just as important as the work itself. Table 25 presents one teacher’s view of the stance she takes as a teacher in a rural community.

Table 25: Teacher Stance in a Rural Community

Teacher as Learner
For me, it was getting to understand the community, getting myself out there, not just getting to know the community, but letting them know me and not being scared to

Table 25 (cont'd)

share stuff about myself. They're just as interested about me, as I am about culture... Getting to know the community and getting involved, really helped because then you know who to talk to, you know how to bring them into the school... You have to be vulnerable in the sense that you're not always the expert on everything, you don't know everything ... But you just have to be vulnerable with them. It's okay not to know something and I think it takes some people a long time because they're like, "No, no, I'm the teacher and I should be the one that's teaching..."

Since the actual language and text of the Alaska Cultural Standards, nor the indicators for the standards, did not play a significant role in the conceptual understanding of culturally responsive teaching, even when asked directly, there doesn't seem to be much breadth (frequency) or depth (teaching through culture, as the standards were intended) in practice; the standards don't appear to be foundational in terms of how teachers and principals identify culturally responsive teaching.

5.2.4. Promising practices.

When asked to identify promising "programs, practices or quality resources" for culturally responsive teaching, 22 of 58 responses (38%) referred to two categories of response: (a) district-level or school level programs, e.g. the "Creating Cultural Competence: C-3" program run by the AK Humanities Forum, and indigenous language programs, and (b) professional development courses. The "promise" of promising practices seems to be outside of the classroom in district programs, professional development opportunities, and cultural activities. There was little mention of culturally responsive teaching practices in core academic courses. The "habits of mind" category consisted of statements like: "It is these traditions that we need to work to embrace through actively listening to our students." There was one response that expressed this sentiment that the question was targeting "program-related answers". The respondent proceeds to say that "On the other hand, I think there is a lot of potential (and application) for educators to develop and innovate culturally responsive teaching that is based more on rapport and relationship, and less on program." This comment is an outlier when it comes to overall response to the question, but it does reinforce the sense that teachers and principals identify culturally responsive teaching in ways related to student relationships and interactions, versus curriculum or pedagogy. Table 11 in Chapter Four presents the most frequent categorized responses and examples. What is missing from the responses are examples

or anecdotes from culturally responsive teaching in the content areas: Math, Science, English/Language Arts, and Social Studies. To some degree this could be caused by the way the question was asked, but similar responses were also reported in the interviews. However, throughout the study in classroom observations and through the survey and interviews, there were very few instances where teachers or principals referred to culturally responsive teaching as a practice to increase student academic achievement through high (and equitable) expectations for all students.

Beyond focused concrete connections to local culture, environment, and community, culturally responsive teaching is often referred to as a way to contextualize education in ways that deepen and enrich student learning and understanding in the content areas. In practical terms, culturally responsive teaching consists of teaching and learning that is contextualized. Research into cognition, as it manifests in everyday activity, suggests that knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). The contexts of student lives and their family situations and backgrounds in tandem with the communities and larger “places” in which they live and go to school form the foundation on which learning will occur (McIntyre, Resberry, & Gonzalez, 2001). This contextualization is the pedagogical process referred to in the Alaska Cultural Standards Implementation guide. “Shifting the focus from teaching and learning *about* cultural heritage as another subject to teaching and learning *through* the local culture and local perspective has been the goal of the *Guide to Implementing the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators*” (AK-EED, 2012, p. iv). This isn’t by any means a value judgment regarding schools’ implementation of the standards, instead it is a reflection of a point in time on the continuum of the implementation a state mandated regulation. In December 2012, the Alaska State Board of Education adopted four of the five Alaska Cultural Standards for teacher evaluation. “Four (4) cultural standards are identified in regulations and must be considered when evaluating educators” (SERRC, 2015). Five years after this regulation was adopted districts have adapted their teacher evaluations to include the cultural standards for educators to meet the letter of this regulation. However, the CRT survey and this research suggest that the implementation of the cultural standards has not achieved the initial goal of the standards implementation guide. Teachers and principals, for the most part do not identify culturally responsive teaching as the contextualization of learning, nor teaching “through the local culture and perspective” as essential frames or processes to

deepen and enrich academic learning.

On the CRT survey, Question 13 asked: How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? The responses suggest that teachers and principals see the influence of culturally responsive teaching as primarily influencing: (a) students' attitudes towards school and learning (engagement, 46%); (b) students' sense of well-being (social/emotional actualization, 32%); and (c) self-concept (as determined by confidence and self-efficacy, 18%). In other words, the response to this question suggests that although there might be secondary influences on academic performance, the primary influence (benefit for students) lies in the changes to attitudes and self-perception. The fact that two of the six indicators for the cultural standards referred to in the survey include references to "engagement" (CA4 Student Engagement with Cultural Connections) and "engaging" (CB2: Engaging Students with Authentic Local Resources) along with much of the professional development involving CRT, might lead to the perception among teachers and principals that the primary influence and justification for implementing CRT practices is engagement. Again, the fact that no respondents cited academic achievement is reflective of the sense among teachers and principals that the primary rationale behind CRT is to engage students. It is important to note that no teachers or principals selected academic achievement as a primary influence of culturally responsive teaching, reinforcing the notion that culturally responsive teaching is something separate from the development of academic skills and knowledge.

This discussion about promising practices suggests that teachers and principals identify culturally responsive teaching in terms of school and district programs, curriculum resources, and "habits of mind" such as actively listening to students. In terms of promising practices educators do not identify teaching through culture, or contextualizing learning in the content areas, other than making connections to local culture, environment, and community as culturally responsive teaching. It is not that they are philosophically opposed to these notions; instead, conversations and training have not focused on these practices.

In terms of the intent of the cultural standards, this study suggests that there is not widespread implementation of the cultural standards, as they were intended to be used, as a guide to teaching "through" culture, versus about culture. However, the site visits to middle schools across the state were inspiring and uplifting in many regards. Despite the gloom and doom in the mainstream press, and emanating from the state legislature in Juneau, there are deeply committed, hard-working

teachers and principals in middle schools across the state. Since I slept mostly in classrooms or storage closets in the schools I visited, it wasn't unusual to see a teacher leave their classroom past midnight, after spending long hours preparing to teach, taking an online course, or giving feedback to students about their work. As an early riser, there were many times when I saw teachers headed to their classrooms with a cup of coffee as early 5:00 a.m. My attempt to answer this research question should in no way suggest that teachers aren't working hard to provide the best possible opportunities for their students. On the contrary, the study shows the many challenges and barriers that public school teachers in Alaska have to overcome in order to do what is right for students.

There was much warmth and joy in the classrooms I visited. There are many lively narratives that I could tell regarding effective middle school teaching. However, for this study there were three observations, or series of observations I believe demonstrated the implementation, not only of the intent of the cultural standards, teaching "through culture" but also the emerging definition of culturally responsive teaching that extends well beyond the standards, and the indicators and evidences of the standards in practice.

5.2.4.1 Jimmy Huntington School, Huslia.

The Jimmy Huntington School was named after the co-author of the novel *On the Edge of Nowhere*. This classic adventure novel is loved by Alaskans across the state. I had several tattered copies in my classroom in Bethel that were circulated among middle school students. This small community on the Koyukuk river was also the home to Sydney Huntington, author of *Shadows on the Koyukuk*, as well as the "Huslia Hustler," legendary dog musher George Attla. This Athabascan village has a rich literary tradition. During my fall visit, Mickey Kenney, the singular middle school teacher was reading *Shadows on the Koyukuk* aloud to 13 students, grades 6-8. Here, the middle school is scheduled more like a typical elementary classroom, as students stay with the same teacher throughout the school day. This means that Mickey teaches all of the content areas, which also provides opportunities for interdisciplinary connections and one on one relationships with students, which can be challenging to develop in schools where middle school teachers see as many as 125 students during a school day. It is important to note that this community is only accessible by air or river. The horizon at dusk in Huslia is a beautiful serene image. Figure 16 presents a photo looking out over the Koyukuk River at sunset in October.



Figure 16: Christian S., (2016) A photo from Huslia, a small, remote Athabascan community on the Koyukon River in the Interior of Alaska.

Two of the issues that teachers identified as a challenge for culturally responsive teaching were pressures regarding standardized testing (26%) on the CRT survey and “mandated, scripted curriculum, lack of autonomy” from the interviews. Huslia is part of the Yukon Koyukuk School District. The district curriculum handbook for 2016/17 states that curriculum is “approved by the Regional School Board and is to be used by teachers in structuring their planning for students within that subject area” (“Yukon Koyukuk School District Curriculum Handbook,” 2016). This handbook recommends Prentice Hall Literature Grades 6-12, which is “aligned to Alaska State Standards.” The teacher and principal are aligned in their approach to the curriculum. Casey Weter is from Huslia and she has a deep, working knowledge of the local context in terms of culture, history, and community expectations for the school. And she takes great pride in the history, culture, and language of the area. With her guidance and support, Mickey has incorporated local literature, as well as the local environment and culture into the curriculum for the middle school. The walls of the school, consisting of two buildings, present student artwork with positive messages. Figure 17 features a piece of student artwork from the elementary school with a typical positive message.

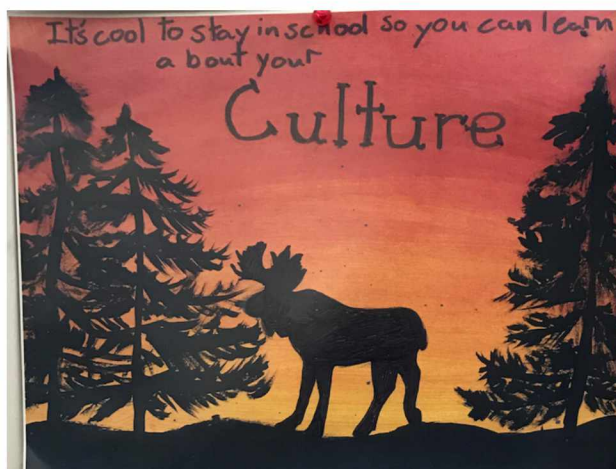


Figure 17: Christian S., (2016) Student artwork from the walls of the Jimmy Huntington School in Huslia portrays a local scene with a positive message about school and culture.

During the spring site visit, Mickey was teaching *Bekk'aatugh Tsunney, Stories we Live By, Traditional Koyukon Athabaskan Stories* by Catherine Attla. She occasionally visited the school to read the stories aloud. The stories in the book are presented in both Denaakk'e (the Koyukon Athabaskan language) and English. As the students took turns reading excerpts aloud and discussing the story, students made connections with the local environment. Mickey paused to ask: "Have you been there?" He was referring to a specific place on the river. Students would respond with descriptions of the place, or stories that took place there. There were also discussions about harvesting salmon and the evolution of fish traps. Students were asked prior to the lesson to create a visual organizer, a story map to follow the plot of the story. Mickey is teaching themes like Man versus Nature, as well as setting, character, conflict and symbolism and metaphor. My notes from the observation include statements like "Students are excited to talk about Medicine Men. They are making connections with the previous story about the death of caribou, that was 'willed' through another person". There is also discussion, as students take notes on subsistence, what is necessary to live in this environment, how to survive in the cold, the importance of grease and fat, and more. Although this lesson is happening during the language arts period, there are connections to math, science and social studies. I also note that students are "animated in the discussions and engaged in the reading". The fact that this is a dark, mysterious story peaks their interest. Mickey let me know that there are students in this class with learning disabilities who are reading at the second and third grade level. These

students are sitting next to three students who are considered to be the highest achieving students at their grade level in the district. Since the students are seated in a half circle, Mickey can easily move to establish eye contact and a direct conversation with a student. He can also ask literal questions to a specific student, followed by an interpretive question to another student. This kind of “live” differentiation of instruction is very challenging to enact with a group of middle school students, but it is also an example of culturally responsive teaching. Having high expectations for all students means that those expectations are specific to each individual student. There is a warm, pleasant, comfortable environment where Mickey frequently checks in with students with question like “How are you doing?” “What do you think is happening there?” Mickey explains how he identifies culturally responsive teaching in this excerpt from his interview, in Table 26.

Table 26: Interview Excerpt Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally Responsive Teaching

It's good not to have an agenda to project on to the students. Not to come out with a particular thing you feel like you need to teach them, whether it's a certain belief or even a lifestyle. I think the more open you are and reactive to show them how to learn, teach them to be thinkers, then within their own environment, they'll be able to think through different things and bring that back to you. I think in terms of being culturally responsive, I think if we are creating learners, they are going to use the materials at hand and that will be their belief systems, their local environment. If you can teach them the subjects within those systems and how to think about them, I think that'll do a lot in being able to retain the culture.

On the wall above the blackboard are the words “I thought the winter had just begun....and now I’ve chewed off part of it.” I notice that every story in the collection ends with this phrase. This sentence ends all of the stories in the collection. When he repeats this phrase, Mickey told me that an elder was in the classroom and he explained that for centuries, it was a primary challenge for survival to have enough meat to get through the winter. Storytelling is a way to “chew off” part of the winter by spending time sustaining lives in other ways. This is such a powerful connection to the previous generations of inhabitants in Huslia. In the forward to the book by Chad Tompson and Eliza Jones, is this short passage:

Catherine Attla learned these stories from her late grandfather Francis Olin, a medicine man of the Koyukuk River. Catherine often tells others about her belief in the religious importance of these stories. She believes that these stories have been filling the spiritual needs of the people for years and years, and that the stories have been the Bible of the Athabaskan people. To many of the Koyukon people who are Christian, these stories are like another Testament, and telling them is like praying. (Jones, 1989)

As a promising practice, this classroom narrative demonstrates connections to the local culture, environment, and community. The interactions with students and the warm, nurturing learning environment suggest positive, respectful relationships with students as empathy for their efforts to connect a challenging text with their personal experience. There is also evidence of the “teacher as learner” throughout the day, as Mickey is anxious to assist students in making bridges between their contexts outside of the school and within the academic subjects. After growing up in Anchorage, for Mickey, Huslia was like a different planet in terms of culture, environment, and history. It is also refreshing to see a teacher embracing a text that has a spiritual context for students. In public schools we need to separate church and state and keep our personal religious views separate from teaching. However, if we are going to engage students as people, it is appropriate to explore and discuss spirituality in an academic setting in the context of local culture.

5.2.4.2 Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School, Juneau

For this study, one of the participating schools determined that two classes from the Chilkat House, a grouping of approximately 55 sixth grade students at Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School would be appropriate for this research for two reasons. First, the teachers who collaborate as part of interdisciplinary teams in this “house” are experienced teachers who have developed innovative practices in culturally responsive teaching. And, they are known within the school and community as culturally responsive teachers. This winter, for the third consecutive year, they are partnering with the Sealaska Heritage Institute for the Voices on the Land project. This collaboration fits in nicely with one teacher’s beliefs and practices related to contextualizing education. Jeannie Wolfe, who teaches math and science at Chilkat House identifies culturally responsive teaching in this way. Table 27 presents an excerpt from her interview.

Table 27: Interview Excerpt Connections

<p>Connections to Community, Culture, History and/or Place</p> <p>Getting to know students changes the whole game. You don't just teach from a textbook when that happens, you end up doing more pull-in from other resources, local resources, local people that might help out. Instead of just teaching according to whatever your text book says, you have to bring it home... We're doing it currently where the kids can say ... "Oh, I know what that is," or "I've heard that before," and then they can start jumping in, then the buy-in becomes much higher.,,, if you start talking about things that are happening in their daily lives, there's more engagement, and more hands are firing up in the air. You just see the energy in the room go up.</p>
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Although there are advantages to implementing culturally responsive teaching programs and projects like this one in an urban community with established organizations like Alaska Native Corporations with non-profit heritage institutes committed to sustaining indigenous culture and languages, there are also challenges that come with these opportunities. First, it is more complex to enact a sustained, collaborative project like the one presented here in a large school with large classes and complex schedules for core classes, lunch periods, homeroom and elective courses. A small school has more freedom to reorganize the school day, or the school week. There are also the challenges associated with collaboration. Dave McKenna, a language arts and social studies teacher in the Chilkat House describes the planning process in this way. Table 28 is an excerpt from Dave's interview.

Table 28: Interview Excerpt Challenges for Culturally Responsive Teaching

<p>Challenges for Culturally Responsive Teaching</p> <p>One of the challenges has been working with the cultural experts in town. It takes a lot of time, it takes a lot of planning. You have to work around schedules, so it does require a lot of effort... I feel like with the artist-in-residence program....We're narrowing it down in our third year to a point where both sides are on the same page in what we're hoping to produce. So, to have a really good quality end product, both sides have to be in really close communication. As sixth grade teachers, I think that we know pretty well what students are capable of and what the right level of challenge is and sometimes we just miss that mark when we're collaborating. It just takes time and I think we're on the same page for this round.</p>

It is important to note that there were classroom observations in Chilkat House prior to the Voices in the Land project. When Dave says that “we know pretty well what students are capable of” he is not only referring to academic expectations but knowledge of sixth grade students in terms of their social and emotional development. I observed a class session where the wall between the rooms was removed, so that there were two classes, approximately 50 sixth grade students working in groups of four. Although there were periods of lively interaction within the groups, there were also times when students were focused on the instruction and guidance from the teachers. While one teacher was at the front of the room as they worked through how a topographic map works, the other teacher would circulate around the combined rooms checking in with students. There was a comfortable pace to the sequence as they moved back and forth from direct instruction to group work. The teachers also used popsicle sticks with student names, so they could call on students randomly. This simple technique helps students to focus in large group settings. There was a sense of community and a warm, positive environment during the lesson. This was punctuated by occasional feedback from the teachers like: “brilliant!” and “YES....that’s what I’m talking about!” This foundation of deliberately setting up a community of learners with shared expectations for behavior and academics, prepared students for the Voices on the Land project. If they had moved from a more traditional, teacher-centered setting, with students sitting in rows, working out of textbooks, the transition to project-based collaborative work would have been more problematic. In other words, the Voices on the Land project grew out of a classroom organized by culturally responsive teaching.

The Voices on the Land project brings together artists in residence, Tlingit elders and students and teachers at elementary and middle schools in Juneau. In this collaboration as students engage in performing arts and digital storytelling projects, they develop critical literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening in two languages. Although the observations and interviews focused on Dave McKenna and Jeannie Wolf and their classrooms, the entire Chilkat House participated in the Voices on the Land project. This team also included teachers Luke Fortier and Cheyenne Cuellar. The team of teachers worked with the cultural experts and artists in residence to plan the project.

The outcomes for the Voices on the Land project focus on two core Tlingit cultural values: Haa Shuka: Honoring Our Ancestors and Future Generations, and Haa Aani: Honoring and Utilizing our land. The learning outcomes include:

1. Students will develop a rich understanding of place and story; why the place is of historic, geographic, and cultural significance.
2. Students will enhance their respect for the land and a lasting impression of connectedness.
3. Students will create a presentation that reflects their learning, is professional in quality, and is a link for others' knowledge. They will publish their presentations in the form of Stop Animation (digital literacy).

The teams of students began their study with stories by Tlingit Elder David Katseek at the Lodge House at the Sealaska Heritage Institute. David is a master storyteller and is generally regarded as a cultural expert whose breadth and depth of knowledge would represent the equivalent of a doctoral degree in the academy. These stories set the stage as students were engaged and connected to the work ahead. They began by researching places of significance. This included Tlingit knowledge of how those places came to be. Then, the instructional sequence to achieve these outcomes included these objectives. Students will:

1. Research specific historic and cultural places in Juneau, comparing/contrasting how each place has changed over time. They will include traditional and modern names.
2. Interview Elders, cultural specialists, and historians during the process and develop a story about that place.
3. Take pictures, recordings, and research each individual place.
4. Re-create the story of those places through a short story and digital literacy.
5. Provide a synopsis and pictures telling the story to future generations.

I observed several of the work sessions while students were engaged in this project. These comments and observations are from my notes:

This is a very complex multi-step task for sixth graders. As they work through the steps outlined by the artist in residence, the teachers circulate among the groups to clarify and to help students answer questions regarding the Tlingit language. Several fluent speakers have been available during the process, and there are resources available to the groups. There are several students who know some of the language, who help with spelling and the Tlingit letters.

Another important aspect to the program in Chilkat house is that the school has partnered with the Goldbelt Heritage Foundation so that all students at the school will receive two weeks of Tlingit instruction. In the fall, I observed one of these classes taught by Lyle James, a highly regarded teacher. During this class, there were choral readings with definitions of Tlingit words and phrases, conversations between the teacher and students or groups of students. It was very active with students standing up to speak and using gestures to illustrate the concepts. There were also discussions about culture, history, place names. Lyle was very animated and the students were engaged in the active lesson. Students also had the opportunity to ask about words and phrases related to their Voices on the Land projects. After the observation, I interviewed Lyle and he emphasized the importance of teaching through culture.

Table 29: Interview Excerpt Teaching Through Culture

Teaching Through Culture
Some of the really good teachers, I would say, don't teach <u>about</u> culture, they teach <u>through</u> culture in the sense that they immerse their students in culture on a daily basis. And they are able to reach the goals of the school district but the school district doesn't always quite see it that way.

Lyle went on to say that he was pleased to have the opportunity to teach Tlingit to all students in the middle school, but he was also frustrated with the overall integration of local culture and language in the school district. Although both the Tlingit language classes and the Voices on the Land project engaged students and connected with local culture in meaningful ways, both were special programs supported by local non-profit organizations.

Here is the process described for students during a class period for the project. (Groups have selected different places in the area for their projects). Their digital stories should include three elements: (a) What was the place like before?, (b) What changed/transition?, and (c) What's it like now? The artist in residence demonstrates stop action animation with an iPad. The students are completely engaged, asking questions, excited about the process ahead. As I circulate, students are working on the artwork (water colors), the text, and the landscape (background) that will comprise the digital story. Some groups are also focused on the writing of the story, to answer the questions outlined above. As a former middle school teacher, it strikes me as an authentic creative process when groups and individuals are moving through the project at different times, in different ways. With adolescents, and most humans, to script a project so

that everyone moves through it together, along some sort of project checklist or continuum denies the reality of how constructivist classrooms work. Figure 18 presents a screen shot from the combined video of the digital stories from the Voices on the Land project.



Figure 18: This screen shot is from a digital story (stop action animation) by students at Dzantiki Heeni Middle School about Gold Creek.

Naming the new middle school in Juneau with a Tlingit place name was very controversial. Dzantiki Heeni in Tlingit means, “where the flounder gather”. In this story, the students animated the place where Gold Creek meets the ocean. The narration says “Gold Creek was used for fishing for salmon and flounder.” Figure 19 presents a screen shot of Mt. Juneau, in Tlingit, “‘Yaadaa at Kale’ refers to ‘beautifully adorned face’”.

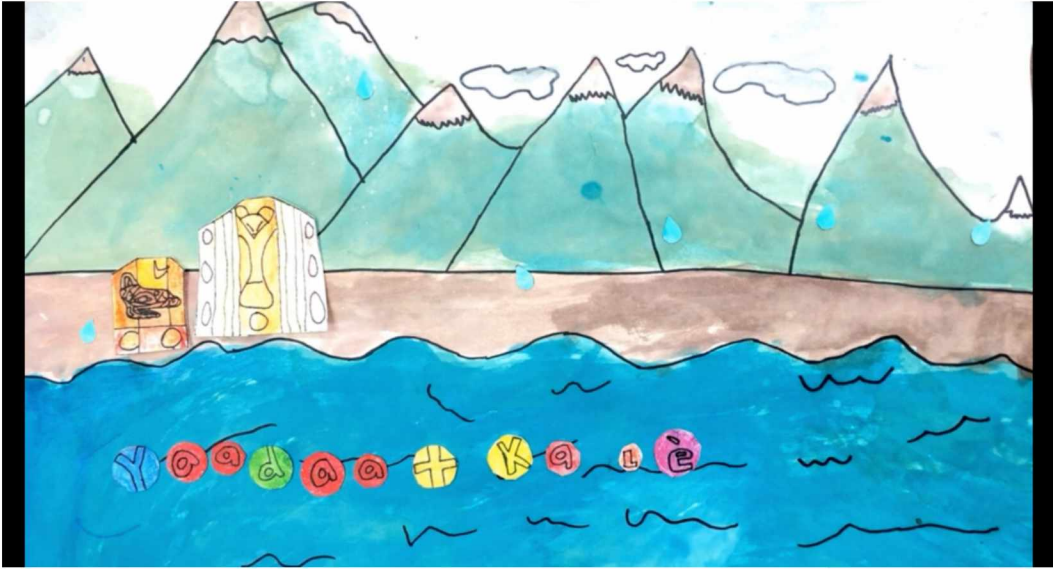


Figure 19: This is a screen shot from a digital story produced by students at Dzantiki Heeni Middle School about Mt. Juneau, Yaadaa at kale', "beautifully adorned face"

The observations and interviews at Chilkat House at Dzantiki Heeni reflected key elements of culturally responsive teaching: (a) connections to local culture, history and environment; (b) teachers as learners; and, most importantly, (c) positive relationships and empathy for students. When Jeannie says, "Getting to know students changes the whole game..." she is not just referring to lesson plans and connections to local culture, she is talking about engaging students as humans, so that "hands are firing up in the air." The Voices on the Land project also demonstrates that indigenous ways of knowing and indigenous culture can be incorporated in diverse "urban" Alaskan classrooms. Place-based, culturally responsive teaching is not just for rural indigenous communities.

5.2.4.3 Akiuk Memorial School, Kasigluk

The intention of this research is not to label each of the 10 middle schools as culturally responsive, or not, nor to rate them on a scale in terms of their cultural responsiveness. Schools are dynamic, constantly changing organizations with many moving pieces and systems that are in flux. To make value judgments, particularly regarding something as complex as cultural responsiveness is not appropriate in this context. However, since one of the purposes of the research is to determine how teachers identify culturally responsive teaching, a closer look at

Akula Memorial School is warranted. As soon as I walked up the boardwalk to the school, I felt what the principal refers to as a “positive vibe” in the school and the community.

In the interest of full disclosure, 20 years ago I was a research associate for the Harvard Graduate School of Education to document the work of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, funded by the Annenberg Rural Challenge. The village of Kasigluk has two distinct communities: Akula and Akiuk, separated by the Johnson River. The focus of the research and documentation effort was Akula Elitnaurviat, which at the time was developing a K-12 Yupik curriculum. I visited the village from 1997 through 2000 as part of a case study. As soon as I arrived in the village, the staff and community asked for assistance in building a website featuring local history and ways of knowing. It was an inspiring project as people dropped off boxes of photos, cassette tapes, vhs tapes, and 8mm film. Over the course of several years, these artifacts were digitized and selected pieces were published on the web. Part of the original website is still live on the Internet. Figure 20 features a photo of one of the Yup'ik Language teachers at the school.

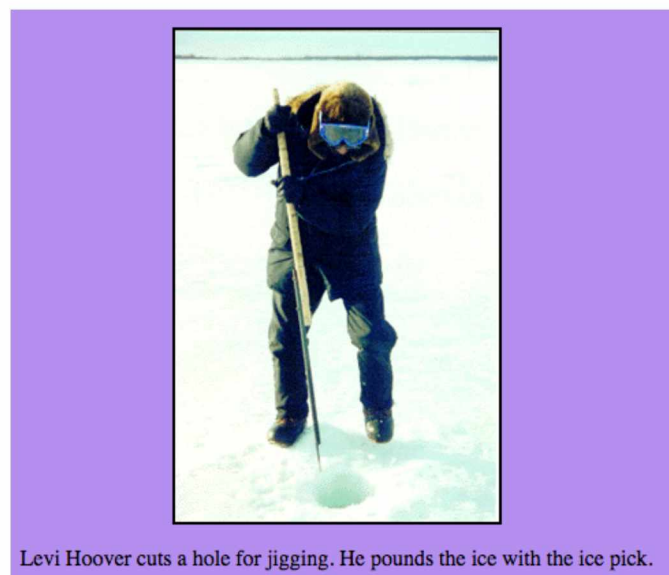


Figure 20: This is a screen shot from the Akula Elitnaurvik website.

As context for the narrative that follows, this project demonstrated the power of culturally responsive teaching, long before the phrase became mainstream in public education. As students and community members delivered the boxes of artifacts for the website project, there was a feeling of great pride and celebration as people gathered around the boxes and talked through the

items that were delivered. There was much laughter and sometimes a student would leave to ask an elder about a photo or how to say something in Yup'ik. Below is an excerpt from the case study that captures the warmth and excitement around that experience:

March 1997: On the last day of the first week, Levi's mother, an elderly Yup'ik woman came in and watched the students for a couple of hours. She didn't say a word. She moved from station to station, watching the students working as they scanned photos, listened to cassette tapes and built web pages. As she left, she said a long Yup'ik word to Charlie Isaac. I asked him what the word meant, and he said it didn't translate to English. I pushed him...and asked him to try his best. He said that the word roughly translated to "These kids are hot stuff." And they are! Imagine moving from a world of seal oil lamps, no electricity, no airplanes, no snow machines or outboard motors....to walking into a classroom and seeing students working on an international network of computers. It is truly amazing to think that the lives of one generation have spanned such dramatic changes. (Christian, 1997)

It was a very heart-warming moment, one of many during the project, as we worked to bring centuries of Yup'ik culture and history on to the "international network of computers." This story is included in this "promising practices" section because there is a long history of culturally responsive teaching and substantive community involvement in Kasigluk. I am intentionally avoiding any discussion of the history that led to the establishment of two villages and two schools. Suffice it to say that my visits to Akiuk Memorial School reinforced the long-standing reputation of Kasigluk as a community that values deep connections between the schools, the culture, and the community. Akiuk, as well as Napaskiak and Kongiginak were selected to be research sites based on recommendations from the district administration. There was a sense that these three schools would welcome the research and would participate willingly. And, the recommendation was also based on the impression that these three schools were working towards culturally responsive teaching in productive ways.

This study has provided a variety of measures to look more closely at schooling in Akiuk. In the previous chapter, I presented a summary of the results arising from this research specifically related to Akiuk. These data provide insight into this notion of a "positive vibe" at Akiuk Memorial School. The results demonstrate students' positive impressions of how their culture is represented at school, that teachers believe culturally responsive teaching influences

students positively, and that the Alaska Cultural Standards were present during classroom observations. And, the results of the Alaska Association of School Boards school climate and connectedness survey shows that Akiuk performed well in these areas as compared to other schools and the state average in the areas of: (a) Caring Others, (b) High Expectations, (c) Peer Climate, (d) Social and Emotional Learning, and (e) Community Support. Using these results as a springboard, I'd like to present a short narrative about the research site visits to Akiuk. When I first arrived in November, I barely had time to drop off my bags before I was invited to go out with the trapping class. Howard Tinker, the teacher for the course, asked if I wanted to go out to bring in the beaver traps. As we walked to the boat, parked behind the school, Howard explained that this was the latest that he could remember going out to bring in traps by boat. He said that years ago, the river was frozen in October, and sometimes in September. I wondered if global warming was influencing these subsistence activities.

As we left the school and headed out onto the smooth water of the Johnson River, the students were very quiet. Five high school students, Howard, and myself sat in the boat as we navigated the tributaries of the river. This photo (Figure 21) was taken as we were leaving the school, one of those moments where it was difficult to determine where the sky stopped and the river began. For the duration of the boat ride, there were no cell phones.



Figure 21: Christian S., (2016) A photo from the bow of the boat during trapping class on the Johnson River.

Occasionally a student would point to the riverbank when a muskrat would slip into the water. Occasionally there were brief conversations in Yup'ik, but for the most part everyone was quiet. After we left the main channel for the river, and entered some of the smaller, narrower tributaries, there was more ice. Eventually, the bow of the boat was breaking through the ice as Howard weaved his way through, occasionally giving the outboard some gas to push forward. Sometimes he would stop the boat and break through the ice with an oar to see how thick it was. He seemed to know the best routes, as we made steady progress until we were probably a mile or so from the school. Eventually, he parked the boat and we climbed up onto a small hill of tundra. It was very still, no wind or breeze, very peaceful as the sun was setting. We could hear the occasional ptarmigan when we followed a narrow trail to check the trap. The trap, placed below a beaver house was sprung. Howard spoke first in Yup'ik, then he turned to me and said "must have been a smart beaver...sprung the trap...see the mud". The students were obviously disappointed. As we were winding our way back to the school, through the same route we had taken on the way to the trap, you could hear the ice crackling and crunching on the sides of the metal boat. For these students, taking a boat out on the tundra for the last time before freeze up was no different than walking into the next classroom before the bell. On the tundra, there is much less need for words than in the classroom with walls. The beauty of the tundra is also reflected in student artwork that adorns the walls of the school. Figure 22 presents paintings by students based on images from the local environment.

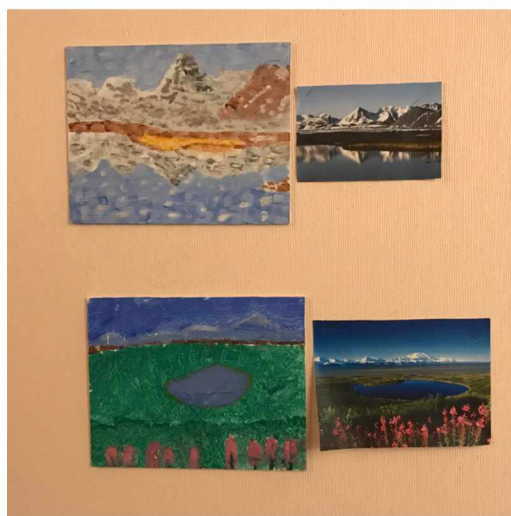


Figure 22: Christian S., (2016) A photo from the walls of Akiuk Memorial School of place-based student artwork.

My next scheduled observation was with Tammy Schneider, (who has been teaching at Akiuk since 2003), during the “Lit Lab” class for eight 8th and 9th grade students. One of the challenges of teaching in multi-grade classrooms is facilitating academic work for students at very different ability levels. What was remarkable about this class period was that students were working on very different projects and assignments at the same time. Tammy moved from student to student and sometimes a small group of students to talk with them about their work. There were two students reading *The Snow Child*, by Eowyn Ivey for the Alaska Battle of the Books. Students were posting responses to their literature circles on Edmodo. A student is laying on the floor, reading and listening to music. Two students are huddled in a corner reading different books. One student is working on his e-portfolio using Weebly. Students move through different activities during the class period, including “life autobiographies” with sound tracks. Occasionally Tammy speaks to the group, “Before you go to computer land, you need to tell me what you’re working on.” The room is arranged in tables, including a ping-pong table; it is very colorful and warm. The class is a positive, nurturing environment. When they are discussing the life autobiography assignment, she asks a question and the students are silent. She teases them by asking “Is this the I don’t remember crowd?” They smile. A student says, “That’s an interactive notebook.” Tammy responds “Smarty Award!” In the interview, she explains how the smarty award came to be after I asked her about it.

Table 30: Interview Excerpt Smarty Awards

“Smarty Awards”

It's kind of a joke. I was reading our evaluation a few years ago and I was looking for something that I'm not as good at? One was celebrating student success. I send home notes....and I make parent phone calls but I don't keep up with it as much as I should. I have some ways but I felt like it's more elementary. Then we had these extra trophies sitting around from some silly thing. So, then I had a clapper at the time. If I asked a question and someone answered in a way that was surprising, to show that they were thinking for themselves... but it's completely arbitrary. Then I would clap and give them the smart temporary trophy, just for the period, the Smarty Award. Then it evolved. I had just recently got this obnoxious trophy on purpose just to tease them so they could glow when I put it on their desk. Then they put their name on a sticky note and put it in this tub. At the end of the quarter from all my classes we draw one sticky for an iTunes gift card Smarty Award. Then, they're so into it.

As students are transitioning back to work, she says “put your finger on your nose if you’re working Weebly”. Although there are only eight students in the class, to keep all of these different activities/assignments/projects going at the same time, while allowing students to make meaningful decisions about their learning, to take ownership of their work, seems effortless. However, as Tammy circulates and talks with students, occasionally using Yup’ik in the conversation, it is clear that students are actively listening to her and there is a productive working relationship. These conversations include talk about academic language, literary terms and concepts, writing process and editing, technology and connections between students’ lives outside of school and the academic work at hand. Though it is a stretch to apply all of the indicators from the cultural standards, there is much that happens in this room that is responding to the culture of the students, including the fabulous smarty awards. Tammy was also one of very few teachers who mentioned high expectations for all kids, the opposite of working from a deficit model.

Table 31: Interview Excerpt High Expectations

High Expectations

I think that's changed (what it takes to be a responsive teacher), how I will define that has changed over time. I think it's come to be more about having high expectations and supporting kids to meet your expectations. I think our students often seem so behind with tests or their grade level or their reading level but they have a great capacity to learn. I don't know all the reasons why they get behind..... It turned my stomach, a few months ago I heard a teacher ... not from here. I heard a teacher say, "They just have too high of expectations. It's too much pressure on those kids." I was like, "No, our kids need to know that we believe they can accomplish great things." Then we need to do the work of helping them get there. I think that includes being culturally relevant like why does it matter? If it's not relevant to their lives it doesn't matter very much.

Tammy’s teaching and her statement above, remind me of Judith Kleinfeld’s notion of the “warm demander.” There was no doubt in that classroom students were expected to do quality work, but there was also humor and a thoughtful, gentle approach to demanding “great things” like the e-portfolios and the autobiographies. I think that Tammy’s approach and belief system is not so much about being responsive to a culture, but being responsive to the individual humans

in her classroom. The “feature articles” about Akiuk Heroes on the wall outside of her classroom, are part of a larger effort to collaborate with the community to define what culture means in Akiuk. Figure 23 presents a photo from the school hallway.

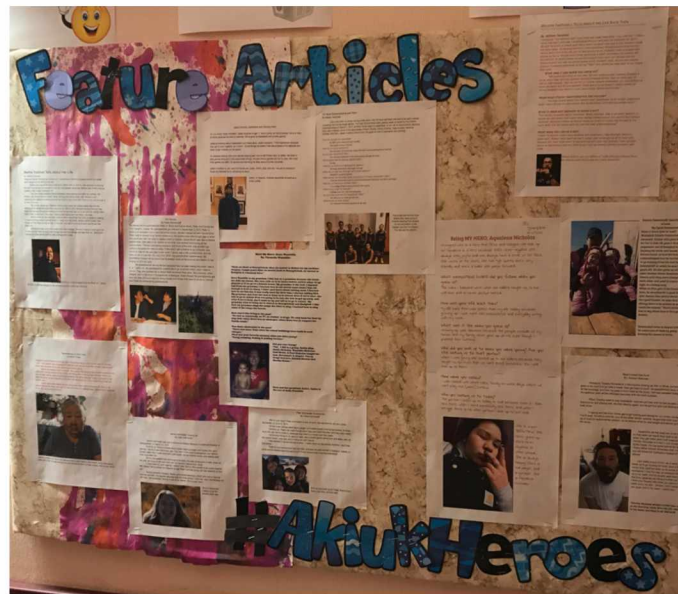


Figure 23: Christian S., (2016) A photo from the walls of Akiuk Memorial School of feature articles and photos about Akiuk Heroes.

The articles are about mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles. Every article demonstrates the deep bonds among this close-knit community. In my mind, this is a powerful cultural artifact, capturing a key characteristic of local culture at this particular moment in time, in this specific place, with these people. In many rural schools, you see display cases with fish traps or mukluks or dance fans. These artifacts are important and they represent the outward manifestations of culture. However, these “feature articles” represent the belief system and worldview of the people who live here. You can’t spend much time in a community like Akiuk without feeling the warmth and loving bonds between the residents here. Christina Powers, the principal at Akiuk had a distinctly different take on culturally responsive teaching, a “stance” that positioned the school as a partner in education.

Table 32: Interview Excerpt Collaborative Inquiry-Based Approach

A Collaborative, Inquiry-based Approach

I think it's (culturally responsive teaching) not defined well in our cultural standards or in the definition. I don't think the state of Alaska's come out with anything that characterizes what I've seen. Beyond helping your students feel welcome in the classroom and respecting that people come from different cultures... I recognize where I am right now it seems easy to say, "Well, we're immersed in one culture. This very specific culture that we have," and so being culturally responsive means that you're going to have elders come into the classroom, and you're going to talk about the history that's here, you're going to support timelines and language structures and at the same time validate them. But, say that there's an academic English and a non-academic English. Those sorts of things would all support being culturally responsive, but for me it's always sat uncomfortably... because I think you define your culture if it's going to survive.

Last year for example, with our hallway theme, we talked about, one big theme that was going to carry us through the year. We're going to be culturally responsive, and what does that mean? Ultimately in discussions with staff and trying to figure it out... The hallway theme was: What does it mean to be Yup'ik living in Kasigluk, going to school at Akiuk Memorial School? We spent all year defining what it means as an individual. The themes were things like: What is your name sake? Who were you named after? Why were you named after them? What are some of their hobbies or things that they enjoyed? Do you have similarities? Do you have differences? We had another theme that was based on Nunapitchuk, the former location of Kasigluk. We took a field trip over there. We had some elders speak to us about what it was like to live there. Then there were some Venn diagrams as people came back and asked ... What was life like in Nunapitchuk versus what it's like for us in Kasigluk (Akiuk)?

Sometimes in the conversation about culturally responsive teaching, particularly in the context of rural communities with indigenous populations, there is a perception that there is a “very specific culture that we have,” instead of the complex, dynamic construct that is indigenous culture, in a time of conflict as well as great technological and societal change. Instead of adopting and adapting district curriculum materials, or asking local elders to come into classrooms to make connections between local knowledge and academic subjects, the staff decided to enact a project that would facilitate the community, in partnership with the school, defining local culture in terms of the way that people interact with each other, social norms and traditions as well as

connections to multiple generations of residents still living in Kasigluk and Nunapitchuk. This is a very complex and thoughtful approach to literally responding to culture through a collaborative inquiry to determine a shared definition of culture. Compared to some of the surface level indicators in the Culture in the Classroom evaluation tool, it is apparent how this approach gets at the belief system, the values, and the worldview of the local culture. This notion of the school responding to local culture by facilitating the study of the culture was also present in Natalie Cowley's classroom.

In the field of teacher preparation, there is the perennial argument over whether some people are simply "born to teach." I've been on both sides of the nature versus nurture argument regarding the preparation of master teachers. After many years in Alaskan classrooms as a teacher, as a supervisor of student teachers, and as a researcher, I think there is much room for developing a teacher's skill set throughout the continuum from a beginning, struggling teacher, to the other end of the continuum of development where master teachers enact a very sophisticated and complex practice. My sense however, is that at either end of the continuum of very ineffective teachers and extremely gifted teachers there are innate qualities, well beyond anything that happens in preparation, evaluation or professional development that is genetic, hereditary or as some would say "hard wired". I would put Natalie Cowley in this last category. I have been very careful in this research not to make value judgments about the quality of instruction. I did refer to Tammy Schneider as a "warm demander." But, after 30 years in Alaskan public education, I can say that I have never seen a teacher with the kind of presence and deep connection to students as people that Natalie Cowley displayed during my time in her classroom. When a master teacher is "bringing it" evaluation tools like iObservation seem trivial and pointless.

The lessons I observed started with the canned, scripted "Read 180" curriculum from the Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD). Students were asked to read Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Fall of the House of Usher*. The lesson plan from Read 180 cites no less than 11th grade level equivalencies from the Alaska Standards for grade six. The objectives of the lesson (from the text book) were as follows: (a) Analyze the change in setting, (b) Analyze a character's reactions, (c) Analyze the resolution of the plot, and (d) Analyze the theme. The point of the lesson was for students to use and apply the four literary terms: setting, character, plot, and theme. The reading of the Edgar Allan Poe story happened before I arrived in the village. On this

day, the students were reviewing the terms and “taking a deeper dive” into the lesson. Here is the sequence I observed over about a two-hour period:

1. Review the four story elements from Reading 180, and the Edgar Allan Poe story.
2. Natalie tells the students that they will need to identify the story elements from the Elder’s stories. (She is clear that every student should take notes and be prepared to respond).
3. As Elder, Maggie Slim enters the room, a student says “She will tell us real stories!”
4. She tells scary stories from the tundra in Yugtun. Stories involve: Northern Lights, making ghosts go away, being alone on the tundra, surviving bears and moose, woman with long fingernails, little people.
5. After she leaves, every student identifies different elements from the stories.
6. Comparison of scary “real stories” from the Tundra and Edgar Allan Poe.
7. Students work in pairs using StoryBird, an online tool for “artful storytelling.” The students combine images and write text to create their own scary stories.

The students were completely transfixed (and sometimes terrified) by the stories. And, they were engaged throughout the sequence. Periodically, when the students started to get squirrely, Natalie would say, “Okay. Hold it. Let’s Dance!” She would put a video clip on the smart board with dancers dressed in space suits with rainbow colored mohawks, and the students would jump up and dance for a few minutes. Every student participated in their own way. This was a very constructive way to get them up and moving so that they could focus on the work at hand. If you look at the sequencing for the lesson, there is a very deliberate scaffolding that takes place working from a review of the terms from the previous lesson, through active construction of meaning, through to higher order thinking skills where students are writing their own stories and applying the concepts that they have learned. Later, in the interview, Natalie explained that several of the students in the class had transferred from other schools because of discipline issues. This middle school group had the reputation for being a very challenging, difficult group. However, in this setting, with this sequence, every student was engaged, focused and productive.

Table 33: Interview Excerpt Positive Vibe

Positive Vibe
There's a really strong, positive vibe here at this school and you notice it as soon as you talk to our kids. Students that transfer in that have had behavior problems at other schools don't really have those issues here. Like I had one student that transferred back and he told his aunt "They just treat me better there at Akiuk." He doesn't have the issues that he was having at the other school. That class that you saw yesterday is most people's worst class.

Although in some ways, the teaching during the observation seemed effortless, the evolution of Natalie's practice was based on a focused determination to be a part of the community. Her efforts extend beyond "Cultural Standard C: Educators participate in community events and activities in appropriate and supportive ways." In the interview she discusses the purposeful actions of a teacher as learner.

Table 34: Interview Excerpt Teacher as Learner

Teacher as Learner
For me, it was getting to understand the community, getting myself out there, not just getting to know the community, but letting them know me and not being scared to share stuff about myself. They're just as interested about me, as I am about culture... Getting to know the community and getting involved, really helped because then you know who to talk to, you know how to bring them into the school... You have to be vulnerable in the sense that you're not always the expert on everything, you don't know everything ... But you just have to be vulnerable with them. It's okay not to know something and I think it takes some people a long time because they're like, "No, no, I'm the teacher and I should be the one that's teaching..."

As discussed earlier, the notion that becoming a culturally responsive teacher involves being vulnerable and taking a stance where the teacher is truly learning from the community and students, approaching teaching with an open heart and open mind seems to be evident in Akiuk, a key component of the "positive vibe." I also hear in Natalie's comments a genuine, confident, self-awareness "not being scared to share stuff about myself." Christina Powers also referred to this quality as critical to survival in a rural community.

Table 35: Interview Excerpt Honest Self-Awareness

Honest Self-Awareness

Okay, so the first thing that I would say to really be successful, the first step that I would look for when I'm interviewing and things like that is an honest self-awareness. I think to be successful in a rural community; in a community that has a general culture that is not familiar to you before you come out here. You need to know who you are and what makes you happy, and what realistically you can cannot live with. What causes you happiness and knowing that ahead of time.

When I was reviewing the Akiuk Memorial School website I came across the “Akiuk Grizzographies.” The junior high students created the first “Grizzographies” in 2014/15. “They interviewed elders to learn how life was in the past. After recording elders, students edited the recordings in Garageband and added intros, hooks, overviews, and outros. They also took pictures of elders to post in the hallway and on this site” (Akiuk Memorial School, 2015). Figure 24 is a photo of Maggie “Angall’aq” Slim, the elder who told stories in Natalie’s classroom:



Figure 24: A photo of Maggie “Angall’aq” Slim, the elder who told stories in Natalie Crawley’s classroom, published with permission from the school website “Grizzliography” section.

The sequence in Natalie’s classroom was the only observation of teaching *through culture* that I observed in 38 formal observations and dozens of informal observations. In this sequence, the academic concepts and literary terms were contextualized through local culture “scary stories from the tundra.” There were many examples of teaching about culture. It could

certainly be argued that the other promising practices, the place-based literature study in Huslia, and the Voices on the Land project certainly incorporated connections to local culture, history, and environment. And, students gained important literacy skills and academic knowledge through those experiences. However, in this instructional sequence, there was tangible evidence that students learned the very Western concepts of theme, setting, character, and plot through the oral tradition of storytelling by Maggie Slim.

5.2.5 Challenges and barriers.

In the interviews, responses were aligned to some degree to the responses to the same question (challenges to culturally responsive teaching) on the CRT survey. However, since the question was open ended, the responses were more varied, and subjects often listed more than one. The most frequent responses were: (a) Time, scheduling, communication; (b) Lack of local, cultural knowledge; (c) Mandated, scripted curriculum; and (d) Pressure for standardized tests. These responses are aligned with the most frequent response on the previous question about the beliefs and practices for culturally responsive teachers, because these challenges/barriers would apply to making connections with local community, culture, history and place in the classroom. All four of these responses impact planning and curriculum instead of the teacher/student interactions cited in response to other questions regarding culturally responsive teaching. These same challenges/barriers would not directly apply to other aspects of culturally responsive teaching cited by teachers and principals, like establishing rapport, developing positive relationships and empathy.

5.3 How is Culturally Responsive Teaching Implemented in Alaskan Middle Schools?

There are several results from the research that suggest that culturally responsive teaching is not widely implemented in Alaskan Middle Schools.

1. Questions 1-6 on the CRT survey ask respondents to determine the level of implementation scored average means ranging from 3.28 (developing) to 4.13 (applying).
2. Ninety-one percent of respondents on the survey indicated that the cultural standards represent the “critical practices and habits of mind” for culturally responsive teaching.
3. Only 30% of respondents on the CRT survey responded that it was “exactly true” that the cultural standards were “widely implemented” in their schools. Forty-six percent reported that this was “moderately true”.

4. Of 38 formal observations, the six indicators of the cultural standards were not present in 21 classrooms (55%). Eleven of the 17 observations (65%) where the cultural standards were present were not core academic classes: e.g. English/LA, Math, Science, Social Studies.

To put these results in context, this study took place less than one year after the end of the No Child Left Behind Act ended in Alaska. As previously noted, NCLB disproportionately affected indigenous and rural communities and populations in negative ways (Jimerson, 2005; McCarty, 2009). Through the CRT surveys and the interviews we know that teachers and principals felt the pressures associated with this accountability system. As mentioned in the section on challenges and barriers they cited the top four barriers as: (a) Time, scheduling, communication; (b) Lack of local, cultural knowledge; (c) Mandated, scripted curriculum; and (d) Pressure for standardized tests. This pressure was also evident in informal conversations and interviews where teachers discussed the lack of autonomy that they felt regarding curriculum and instruction. And, principals cited pressures to increase test scores coming from both the district and state level.

Table 36: Interview Excerpt Impact of NCLB

Impact of NCLB
As a principal, I feel like we're always caught in the middle, and that we're caught in the middle between the demands of what used to be NCLB or the new Every Student Succeeds Act now. We're caught in the middle of those pressures and what the local community wants in terms of the cultural aspect of school. It's very difficult to serve both of those different purposes at the same time. In turn, this is not a good thing to say, but in turn we're not doing a very good job of either one because we're trying to walk down both sides of the street at the same time. We're supposed to bring those two purposes together, but that's very difficult, especially with the public report cards and the testing.

This comment is reflective of many of the interviews, the survey, and informal conversations. Teachers and principals do not see culturally responsive teaching as a means to improve academic achievement. And, as this principal notes, they often see culturally responsive teaching as a barrier, or at best a worthwhile practice that can interfere with efforts to improve student academic achievement.

There are multiple ways to look at this question depending on how you define culturally responsive teaching. With a limited, often surface level definition as indicated by the Culture in the Classroom tool, which seems to be the working definition in most schools, if we extrapolate the response of 91% of the teachers and principals who agreed that the cultural standards represent the “critical practices and habits of mind” for culturally responsive teaching, then you would come to the conclusion that it is not widely implementing. If you consider a broader definition, such as the “areas of emphasis” for preservice teachers that Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggest: (a) sociocultural consciousness, (b) an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds, (c) commitment and skills to act as agents of change, (d) constructivist views of learning, (e) learning about students, and (f) culturally responsive teaching practices, then the implementation is at more of a minimal level.

The same is true if you consider Culturally Responsive Teaching in practical terms. Geneva Gay (2010) argues that to be culturally responsive, teachers must recognize the internal structure of ethnic learning styles, which include at least eight key strategies or considerations for teaching: (a) preferred content; (b) ways of working through learning tasks; (c) techniques for organizing and conveying ideas and thoughts; (d) physical and social settings for task performance; (e) structural arrangements of work, study, and performance space; (f) perceptual stimulation for receiving, processing, and demonstrating comprehension and competence; (g) motivations, incentives, and rewards for learning; and (h) interpersonal interactional styles.

There were certainly middle school teachers in this study who employed many of these strategies or considerations in their teaching with differentiated instruction and a deep working knowledge of how students learn and their learning styles and preferences. Yet, there were also many classrooms that were working through scripted curriculum. This would certainly be an avenue for future research, but my sense is that you would not find wide implementation of culturally responsive teaching through this frame either.

Another important consideration in terms of the implementation of culturally responsive teaching is the contrasting styles and approaches from teachers within the same school. There was one school in the study where I observed and interviewed three middle school teachers who taught almost next door to each other. Yet, even though they taught in the same school in the same community, their “stances” towards teaching, culture, and the community were worlds apart. If you simply read the excerpts from the interviews, it would be easy to assume that they

taught in different schools, and possibly different states. In order to discuss the implementation of culturally responsive teaching, I'd like to present the views of these three teachers. These interviews took place in their classrooms on the same days that they were observed.

Table 37: Interview Excerpts of Three Teacher Views

Teacher One: Beliefs and Practices of a Culturally Responsive Teacher

A really big thing to keep in mind is the cultural sensitivity, what I try to keep foremost is that we are here to give them the tools to excel in life. We are not here to dictate to them what they must do to achieve happiness: student loans, credit card debts, traffic, so on and so forth. Come in with open ears, not arrogance, "This is the way you must do it. This is what you must do to achieve happiness in life." Come in with open ears, and proceed with a loving cultural connection, rather than a supremacist dictate.

Community Expectations

Our staff, we've got a great staff here, everybody's highly qualified in their field. Most of us are well rounded, because we have to wear many hats. We do a very good job of preparing the students who have those dreams, who want that knowledge. The school's done a good job of preparing kids to go out....They do have the tools. They are given the tools, and they are exposed to what they need to succeed in the outside world. The decision is up to them, it's not up to us, and it's not up to us to be condescending to them in any of their decisions or their lifestyle.

Teacher Two: Beliefs and Practices of a Culturally Responsive Teacher

First of all, it's not my culture and I would be teaching what I know through a white person's perspective, which is not authentic. But, I try to bring in what their knowledge and beliefs are. I always acknowledge them. Like for science. If we talk about the Northern Lights, I tell them..."My job as a teacher is to tell you the scientific reason. You tell me your beliefs and can they coincide?" I give them choices. I'm not saying, you're wrong, I'm not telling you you're right, you have to make your own decisions. That's because I want them to be thinking. It has nothing to do with culture. It's that acknowledgement that because they think it's their ancestors creating them (Northern Lights), I say this is the scientific reason. Could your ancestors be manipulating the elements? Let them make their choices. It's not my job to ever tell them I really don't believe that, it's dumb. I'm like, okay that's interesting.

Table 37 (cont'd)

Community Expectations

They want us to take care of their children and keep them out of their homes. They get upset if we close the school, not because the kids are missing school but because the kids are at home and they have to feed them. Not all of them are like that, but that's the general consensus. It just boggles my mind that the three-year-olds run around completely unsupervised outside. I'm like, I don't care how good the neighborhood is, my three-year-old is never going to be unsupervised, ever. Still, this is one of the nicest villages with the nicest kids. I tried really hard the first three years and then I'm like, you know what, I invite them (parents) in, if they come they come, if they don't, they don't. I'm not going to stress about it. I have other things that are more important.

Teacher Three: Beliefs and Practices of a Culturally Responsive Teacher

So your belief ... You have to believe in the culture and the traditions. You have to have the belief system that they believe here to have better understanding of the people. Their belief system is not the same as the Western Society. So, if you cannot understand that, you will never understand them. These are very internalized beliefs. It means they feel them deeply within themselves... You have to be willing to adapt to the culture. The quickest way for somebody who is non-native or not from here... You would have to prove yourself to the community that you are willing to dig in and get dirty and just be gung-ho at it! That way the village will accept you and sometimes adopt you into the community and then you become one of us. That's when they start taking you out to do the activities; hunting, berry picking, dancing, all of those types of things that are culturally relevant to them... They have a better understanding of their children because this is the belief system that is used at home. The belief system is based on the value system that we have and we always fall back to these all the time; humor, humility, knowledge of language, love and respect for elders and yourselves.

Community Expectations

You want them to actually use the traditions. They want them to be involved in all the cultural activities we have here. One is the (spring) Hunt, where the whole community gets together and hunts ... Children, just as much as adults. That's where your respect of land, respect of animals, and respect of each other comes in. Berry picking ... We always tell our children don't leave your trash. It's to the point where you'll see a kid walking down the street and they see a trash, they'll pick it up. That comes back to your values. I guess I could say that (the community expects) a child or a young adult who uses the core values in their lives, actually uses them and uses them to fall back on to guide them in their life with decisions and attitude and behaviors.

For some context, Teacher One taught Biology and Science. His classroom was full of local images, some with indigenous language vocabulary next to them. There is a very warm pleasant environment in the classroom. As the students build topographic maps with clay, the teacher stops by and tells the student: “You’re keeping this to scale, one square inch equals what?” The student responds: “One inch equals one square mile.” The teacher responds, “That’s right. You’ve got this my friend!” After the teacher leaves, the student turns to his partner, grins and says “See how smart I am.” In the interview the teacher goes on to say how he regularly brings elders into the classroom and describes numerous projects outside the school where they study weather, caribou, salmon migration, tides through experiential learning. The teacher has a very respectful, careful relationship with local culture and the community. When he describes a “loving cultural connection,” he’s referring to a thoughtful, caring approach to culturally responsive teaching. He said a couple of times, “ I don’t want to step on anyone’s toes, but I do want to connect with local culture when we can.” I would characterize the instruction as culturally responsive, both in terms of the curriculum, connections to local culture and the environment as well as the relationships with students.

In the second teacher’s room, one wall is covered with posters and images of Mesopotamia, including a map of the Tigris-Euphrates river system. The students are seated in desks, in rows. The teacher is leading a discussion about a section of the textbook regarding the “world’s earliest civilization.” Students are talking with each other, drawing, asking to go to the bathroom. They seem disinterested in the lesson. The teacher is very tolerant of disruptive behavior and moves along with apparent disregard for the lack of student involvement in the lesson. This classroom and this lesson could be transported to Indiana or London, without any consequence. This is an example of decontextualized learning, where a body of content, mostly factual, is delivered or disseminated to students, mostly through lecture and direct instruction. This teaching style reflects the teacher’s “stance” that “it’s not my culture.” Not only does she not see it as part of her job as a teacher to make connections with culture, she is openly hostile to what she considers to be superstitions and inappropriate methods for child rearing and parenting. Although it’s not necessary to enact the cultural standards in order to be culturally responsive, my sense during the observation and the interview was that this teacher saw herself as separate from the community and the culture, and it was her job to “prepare them for the real world, in

case they want to leave.” The teacher was not new to the community and had no intentions to leave. She felt that she was effective in doing the job she was hired to do.

Lastly, the third teacher taught indigenous language and culture classes to the K-12 student body. As her interview comments suggest, she was passionate about her work and deeply connected to the community, the culture and the language. It was clear that she was teaching *through* culture and *about* culture at the same time. During one lesson students were making word wheels with the indigenous language. As they turned the wheel so that different vocabulary words were aligned with each other, they would act out the words or explain what they meant to each other. It was very lively with students on the floor, in chairs, standing up. There were occasionally English words, but the vast majority of the lesson was in the indigenous language. It was apparent that everyone in the room, students at different ages and the teacher, were engaged in learning as they would pause to look up words in various resources, and to check in with each other regarding the correct way to say something, or a word’s meaning. This was a culturally responsive classroom. There was a poster in the back of the room that listed the local indigenous values. These values were also represented in the classroom interaction and curriculum. “The belief system is based on the value system that we have and we always fall back to these all the time; humor, humility, knowledge of language, love and respect for elders and yourselves” (Teacher One, interview).

The purpose in examining these interview excerpts and notes from observations in the three classrooms is to demonstrate that the implementation of culturally responsive teaching varies, from day to day, from classroom to classroom and from school to school. Middle school students can experience wildly disparate approaches to teaching and learning, depending on the “stance” of the teacher regarding equity (high expectations) as well as their relationship and positionality regarding culture and the community. Figure 25 presents a diagram of how the three teachers are positioned within the school and community.

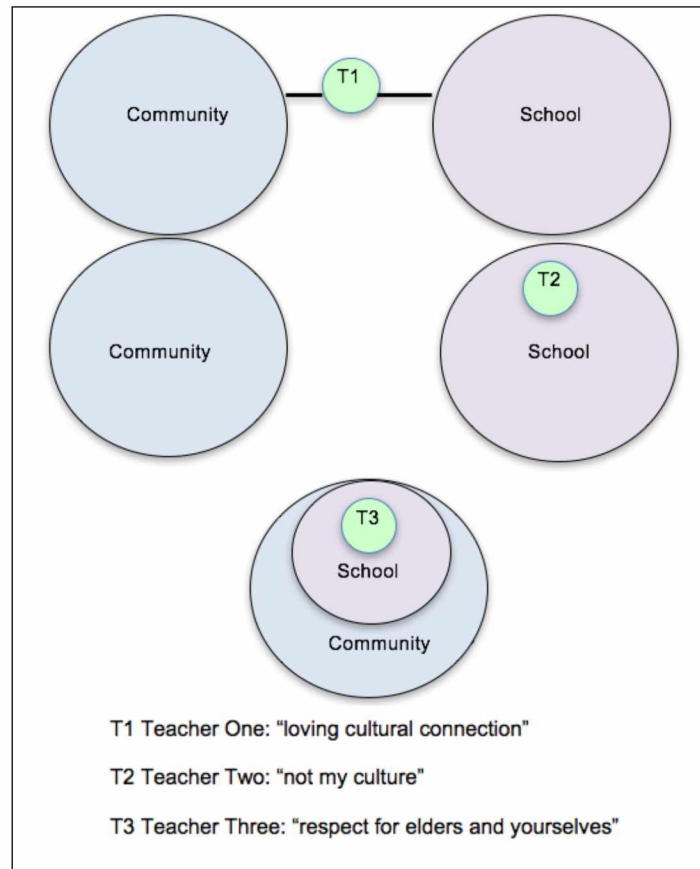


Figure 25: Positionality of Three Teachers Within School and Community

I think the teachers would characterize their positions in the following ways. Teacher one considers himself a “bridge” between the school and the community. It is his responsibility to form the “loving cultural connection” to contextualize learning in his classroom. The second teacher considered herself as an outsider. She said, “I could live here for another twenty years and still be an outsider.” And the third teacher does not see a separation between the school and the community. I would characterize her positioning as embedded, or inclusive in the community and the culture.

Overall, the data from the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, the Classroom Observations and the interviews suggest that Culturally Responsive Teaching is not widely implemented in Alaskan Middle School Classrooms.

5.4 How is Culturally Responsive Teaching Connected to Student Self-Efficacy in Alaskan Middle Schools?

There are several results from the research that demonstrate a relationship between Culturally Responsive Teaching and student-self efficacy and also engagement. First, Question 13 on the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey asked: How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? The responses suggest that teachers and principals see the primary influences as: (a) students' attitudes towards school and learning (engagement, 46%); (b) Students' sense of well-being (social/emotional actualization, 32%); and (c) Self-concept (as determined by confidence and self-efficacy, 18%). As noted previously, no teachers selected academic achievement as a primary influence for Culturally Responsive Teaching. The perception that culturally responsive teaching positively influences student engagement and social-emotional well-being at school is also reinforced through the interviews. Jeannie Wolf commented on this influence when asked about culturally responsive teaching "...if you start talking about things that are happening in their daily lives, there's more engagement, and more hands are firing up in the air." And, principal Ben White also referred to this in his response to the same question... "What does it mean to be identifying and addressing the social-emotional needs of our kids? ...the only way you can do any of that is by having relationships, quality relationships with students".

Several small studies connect culturally responsive teaching with engagement, examples include: (Bean et al., 1999; Hill, 2009; Howard, 2001). The *Culture in the Classroom* publication has 19 references to engagement with many of the indicators and evidences related to student engagement. As evidenced by the classroom observations, when culturally responsive teaching was present, students were engaged. Particularly in the three narratives about promising practices: Place-based Literature Study: Huslia, Voices on the Land, Juneau, and the Collaborative Inquiry Model from Akiuk, students displayed a very high level of engagement.

With the classroom observation data, after removing the data from the observations where the indicators of the cultural standards were not present (at all), examining only the data from the observations where the standards were present, two of the six indicators for the cultural standards evaluated related to engagement: CA4: Student Engagement with Cultural Connections and CB2: Engaging Students with Authentic Local Resources were most frequently observed. Of the observations where the indicators (cultural standards) were present, these two indicators

received the highest average scores: 1.6 and 1.33 on the five-point scale. These data indicate a relationship between culturally responsive teaching, as observed with the iObservation tool, and student engagement.

In order to discuss the influence of culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy, the Student Self-Efficacy Survey responses suggested that there was a fairly high level of self-efficacy across schools. With the median for all questions at 3.0 (moderately true), and with very few (less than 5% of responses) at the 1.0 or “not at all true” level, it suggests that when participating middle school students at all of these schools evaluated themselves in terms of self-efficacy they rated themselves as mostly “moderately” efficacious or confident. In looking at the self-efficacy data in different ways, one separation was clear.

Looking more broadly at all of the schools, the schools with the higher percentage of Alaska Native (>94%) students, described in the study as rural schools had a lower mean score for the SES survey: 2.99 compared to a mean of 3.17 for the schools described as urban. More importantly, not one rural school had a mean score higher than the lowest of the urban schools, 3.09. This difference between schools could be partially explained by ethnicity. In one study, both self-esteem and ethnic identity were identified as influences upon adolescents’ perception of their ability to achieve academically, and also regarding their perception of goal attainment (Smith et al., 1999).

In addition to ethnicity, there are many factors that contribute to self-efficacy. In a recent study by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, slightly more than one-third (35.6%) of adult Alaskans disclosed zero Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), more than one out of four (27.4%) indicated that they experienced three or more ACEs before the age of 18 years old. ACEs are experiences with abuse, household dysfunction and neglect (Chamberlain, 2016). These data resulted in a statewide initiative to educate service providers. Although traumatic events and ACEs occur in both rural and urban communities, the effects in small, isolated, close knit communities can be widely felt and long lasting. Between my fall and spring visits to one community, there were two traumatic events, a suicide and an accidental death. These events had a profound effect on the students and staff at the school.

In order to separate the influence of culturally responsive teaching, and student self-efficacy, by separating the three highest mean scores and comparing them to the two lowest scores on the student self-efficacy survey, (essentially eliminating the mid-range mean scores) a

regression revealed a correlation, $r=.91$. This suggests that in these five schools (Juneau, Sitka, Nenana, Kongiginak and Huslia) there was a relationship between culturally responsive teaching (as represented on the CRT Survey) and student self-efficacy (as represented on the SES Survey). Note: because of the small sample size this observation will be described as a relationship between the school means on the CRT survey and the SES survey.

Looking across the data related to culturally responsive teaching and student engagement and student self-efficacy, there is a relationship in terms of a connection between the teaching practice and these student behaviors and perceptions. Further research is needed in order to draw more definitive connections between them.

5.5 Summary

The results of the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, the Classroom Observations, and the Teacher and Principal Interviews suggest that the Alaska Cultural Standards are not implemented widely, certainly without the depth and breadth that were envisioned by the cultural standards project. However, as the promising practices suggest, there are middle school teachers and principals with a complex and inclusive perspective on culturally responsive teaching, and these leaders and innovators are working against the grain, to rise above pressures to teach to the test, to implement scripted decontextualized curriculum and to create learning environments that are culturally responsive to all students.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

There is a perception among educators in Alaska that culturally responsive teaching may provide a vehicle for closing the achievement gap between indigenous and Caucasian student populations. This study examined teacher and principal perceptions of culturally responsive teaching, as well as the current state of implementation in Alaskan classrooms. This study also addresses the lack of research and understanding regarding the relationship between culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy for middle school students. These conclusions and recommendations are based on the results of four methods: (a) The Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, (b) The Student Self-Efficacy Survey, (c) The Classroom Observation Rating Scale, and (d) the semi-structured interviews with teachers and principals.

6.2 Conclusions

How do teachers and principals identify culturally responsive teaching?

The majority of teachers and principals in Alaskan Middle Schools identify culturally responsive teaching in these ways. Culturally responsive teachers develop positive, respectful, working relationships with students. Being empathetic to students' lives, beliefs, issues and experiences outside of school is a critical component to effective teaching. Culturally responsive teachers make connections between academic content and local culture, community and environment to engage students. Teachers identify the Alaska Cultural Standards as representing the "critical practices and habits of mind" for culturally responsive teaching.

Teachers and principals perceive that the purpose of culturally responsive teaching is to engage students, to promote social/emotional well-being and confidence/self-efficacy. They do not see academic achievement as a primary influence of culturally responsive teaching. This partial identification is a reflection of the lack of preparation and professional development in culturally responsive teaching. While the identification described above is the general sense of teachers and principals, there are leaders and innovators, such as the teachers involved in the "Promising Practices," who have developed beliefs and practices that reflect an enactment of a philosophical "stance" or positioning in the school and the community.

There is a widely held belief that teachers must be active learners in their classrooms and in the communities they serve. By positioning themselves as active learners, and approaching

teaching with “open hearts and open minds” respectful, productive relationships can occur. Teachers and principals identify culturally responsive teaching in different ways in urban and rural settings. Rural educators often refer to “the culture” and “the community,” as do the cultural standards documents, whereas urban educators refer to individual students’ perceptions of their identity and culture, as well as multiple communities.

By enacting equitable, high expectations for all students, academic achievement will be affected in positive ways, i.e. students respond to challenging academic work. Culturally responsive teaching is not teaching about culture, but rather contextualizing learning through culture. Learning should be contextualized through a student’s individual experience, culture, beliefs and interests.

How is culturally responsive teaching implemented in Alaskan middle schools?

Culturally Responsive Teaching as defined by the Alaska Cultural Standards and evaluated through the Culture in the Classroom tool is not widely implemented in Alaskan Middle Schools. There are programs, projects and courses that focus on culture and language that enact the standards, but in general, they are not incorporated in daily teaching practice. The general practice is to teach about culture, instead of through culture, as the standards are intended. There are leaders and innovators who embrace a more complex and inclusive perspective of culturally responsive teaching, focused on relationships with students and ongoing collaboration with communities. This approach is enacted in rare promising practices that engage students.

The Alaska Cultural Standards project has influenced public education in positive ways. Teacher preparation programs across the state have implemented the standards as components of evaluation and assessment systems. There is no doubt that elevating the contextualizing of teaching and learning through culture is a worthwhile endeavor, as is bringing together Native Alaskan educators to develop materials to support the integration of culture. However, considering the lack of systemic implementation across the state, especially in terms of teaching “through culture,” there is a question about the impact of the efforts to standardize culturally responsive teaching through the establishment of standards, which are largely a western construct. The promising practice at Akiuk is one example of an alternative path to culturally responsive education. Instead of evaluating and implementing the practice of culturally

responsive teaching based on a set of standards, the school partnered with the community to define culture in the context of that community. Cultures across the state are by nature dynamic and idiosyncratic. There are tangible differences in social protocols and language in communities within the same region. There was a consistent voice in interviews that suggested that teachers must be learners in the communities where they work and in their classrooms. The process of becoming a culturally responsive teacher, might begin with a set of standards, but it is the sociocultural stance of approaching teaching and learning with genuine empathy and respect for all students that will lead to equity, agency and academic achievement.

How is culturally responsive teaching connected to student self-efficacy in Alaskan middle schools?

There is a relationship between culturally responsive teaching and student engagement and student self-efficacy in Alaskan Middle Schools as reported by teachers and principals in surveys and semi-structured interviews. There is a relationship between Culturally Responsive Teaching and factors contributing to student self-efficacy: (a) Caring Others; (b) High Expectations; (c) Peer Climate; (d) Social and Emotional Learning; and (e) Community Support indicated by an analysis of the School Climate and Connectedness Survey, focused on Akiuk Memorial School (American Institutes for Research, 2016). The classroom observations provided tangible evidence that culturally responsive teaching practices resulted in genuine student engagement. There is also an relationship between ethnicity and student self-efficacy (Smith et al., 1999). In order to better understand the relationship between culturally responsive teaching and student self-efficacy, ethnicity and other influences must also be examined.

6.3 Recommendations

In order for Culturally Responsive Teaching to be implemented, school and district administrations should articulate the relationship between culturally responsive teaching and high expectations and academic achievement, in the context of quality, sustained professional development for all practicing teachers and administrators. Resources should be diverted from decontextualized, scripted curriculum resources, identified as barriers to culturally responsive teaching, to professional development.

In order for early career teachers to enter the profession prepared to be culturally responsive teachers, pre-service programs should include the strands that Villegas and Lucas

recommend for preparing culturally responsive teachers: (a) sociocultural consciousness, (b) an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds commitment, (c) commitment and skills to act as agents of change, (d) constructivist views of learning, (e) learning about students, (f) culturally responsive teaching practices (2002).

Teachers and administrators in this study report that one of the challenges of implementing culturally responsive teaching is “lack of local, cultural knowledge and fear of making mistakes.” Preparing Alaskan teachers for Alaskan schools in the communities where they live is one way to address this issue. Also, if schools can develop structured systems whereby cultural mentors can be prepared to work alongside classroom teachers to prepare and deliver culturally responsive curriculum, the anxiety about the lack of local knowledge would be addressed.

Alaskan educators should work together to develop a teacher evaluation system that provides quality, meaningful feedback to teachers, focusing on: (a) Interactions between teachers and students; (b) Productive, respectful relationships between teachers and students (empathy); (c) Contextualizing academic content through students’ culture, experiences and interests; (d) Teacher as Learner/Researcher, (the ability to actively learn about students, student learning and the communities they serve).

6.4 Future Research

This research shows that teachers and principals identify and implement culturally responsive teaching in a variety of ways. Developing a statewide teacher and administrator survey to identify culturally responsive teaching would increase the sample size and validity of the results. Other studies should be done, and instruments developed, to connect culturally responsive teaching to student achievement, engagement, and self-efficacy.

There are many factors that influence adolescent perceptions of self-efficacy, including ethnicity, culture, adverse childhood experiences, social support, goal attainment, and academic achievement. In order to determine the connections between student self-efficacy and culturally responsive teaching, research should be conducted that systematically identifies and separates these other factors.

The promising practices identified at Akiuk Memorial School (Kasigluk), Dzantiki Heeni Middle School (Juneau), and the Jimmy Huntington School (Huslia), suggest that multi-year case

studies with interviews and focus groups with students, parents, community members as well as educators would lead to insights about the influence of culturally responsive teaching.

School and district administrative leadership is critical for implementing culturally responsive teaching practice. Research that focuses on the role of leadership in the development and implementation of culturally responsive teaching would inform best practice in the field.

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Appendix A: Teacher Information Form

1/5/2017

Teacher Information Form

Teacher Information Form

The purpose of this form is to gather basic data on the teachers participating in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Research.

1. Name

.....

2. School and District

.....

3. Subjects and Grade Levels Taught (2016-17)

.....

.....

.....

4. Where did you grow up?

.....

5. How long have you been a certified teacher?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This is my first year.
- ☐ 2-5 years
- ☐ 6 years or more.

6. Where did you complete your teacher preparation program?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Outside of Alaska
- ☐ Alaska

7. Have you ever completed a class, workshop or training session regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. If yes, please briefly describe that professional development experience.

Appendix B: Principal Information Form

1/5/2017

Principal Information Form

Principal Information Form

The purpose of this form is to gather basic data on the principals participating in the Culturally Responsive Teaching Research.

1. Name

.....

2. School and District

.....

3. Teaching Experience: Subjects and Grade Levels Taught

.....

.....

.....

4. Where did you grow up?

.....

5. How many years did you teach?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 2-5 years
☐ 6 to 10 years
☐ More than 10 years

6. How long have you been a principal?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ This is my first year.
☐ 2-5 years
☐ 6 to 10 years
☐ More than 10 years

7. Where did you complete your teacher preparation program?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Outside of Alaska
☐ Alaska

<https://docs.google.com/a/alaska.edu/forms/d/1qHV0RXPf3YOgmPeukM8sZCqIDg1aUgMXtRjQAVWKp70/edit>

1/2

8. Where did you complete your principal preparation program? (Type B certificate)

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Outside of Alaska
- ☐ Alaska

9. Have you ever completed a class, workshop or training session regarding Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. If yes, please briefly describe that professional development experience.

.....

.....

Appendix C: Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey

Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey: Teacher Version

1. In my classroom, I integrate and connect traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students when interacting with new content. (Cultural Standards, CA2)

Example Behaviors: 1. helping students make connections between content and their traditions, customs, values, and practices. 2. integrating cross-curricular cultural connections to content. 3. asking questions of students that require inferences between cultural background and content.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

2. I use the students' cultural traditions, customs, values and practices when designing the classroom environment. (Cultural Standards, CA3)

Example Behaviors: 1. involving members of the community to participate in the classroom design 2. displaying cultural products of student work that reflect the students' traditions, customs, values, and practices. 3. providing cultural resources on a regular basis, i.e., books, web sites, brochures, speakers, that students can access.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

3. I use students' traditions, customs, values, and practices to engage them in learning. (Cultural Standards CA4)

Example Behaviors: 1. using activities related to traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students in class 2. demonstrating awareness of the nonverbal communication appropriate to the customs of the students 3. facilitating discussions with students about topics in which they are interested.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

4. I engage students in learning experiences that integrate the local environment, community resources, and issues when interacting with content. (Cultural Standards CB2)

Example Behaviors: 1. facilitating learning activities to support connections to the local environment and culture. 2. using the local environment, i.e. out- of-doors lessons, field trips, place based investigations, etc. 3. contextualizing academic content through local environment

and culture

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

5. I provide rigorous learning opportunities for students that combine higher order thinking skills and student autonomy (from teacher-directed to student-directed). (Cultural Standards CE2) *

Example Educators: 1. organizing students in various ways to interact with content. 2. using strategies that challenge students to apply their knowledge in creative ways, i.e. problem solving, examining similarities and differences, etc. 3. facilitating culturally responsive discussions allowing students to apply critical thinking skills.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

6. I demonstrate value and respect for all students of all cultures and challenge them to strive for educational excellence. (Cultural Standards CE3)

Example Behaviors: 1. interacting with students in culturally responsive ways, i.e. smiles, understanding nonverbal signs, etc. 3. promoting inclusion of diverse cultures. 4. modeling respect for all students. 5. encouraging students to achieve their full potential through scaffolding instruction and/or differentiation.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

7. To what degree do you agree with this statement: The Alaska Cultural Standards represent the critical practices and habits of mind for culturally responsive teaching.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

8. To what degree do you agree with this statement: The Alaska Cultural Standards are widely implemented in our school.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

9. To what degree do you agree with this statement: Culturally responsive teaching influences student self-efficacy and success in school.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

10. Which of the following practices do you consider to be MOST important for culturally responsive teaching?

1. making connections with the traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students
2. establishing a positive, respectful rapport with all students
3. establishing clear and rigorous academic expectations for all students
4. understanding the traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students
5. developing and implementing place-based, culturally responsive units of instruction

11. What do you see as the most significant challenge or barrier to implementing culturally responsive teaching in your school?

1. Pressure regarding standardized tests
2. Lack of flexibility of time within the school schedule and/or calendar
3. Lack of training and quality materials/resources
4. Lack of familiarity with local culture and community
5. Lack of quality professional development opportunities

12. What do you see as promising practices, programs or quality resources for culturally responsive teaching in your school, district, or elsewhere?

Please include websites, authors, program titles and/or any relevant information so that these programs and resources can be located.

Your answer: Text Box

13. How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? Please select the area of greatest impact.

Engagement, Academic Achievement, Confidence/Self-Efficacy, Social/Emotional Well Being
None of the Above

Please send an email message to srchristian@alaska.edu with this code: CRT2017. Upon receipt, your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 Visa Gift Card. Thank you for your participation!

Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey: Principal Version

1. At our school, teachers integrate and connect traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students when interacting with new content. (Cultural Standards, CA2)

Example Behaviors: 1. helping students make connections between content and their traditions, customs, values, and practices. 2. integrating cross-curricular cultural connections to content. 3. asking questions of students that require inferences between cultural background and content.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

2. At our school, teachers incorporate students' cultural traditions, customs, values and practices when designing the classroom environment. (Cultural Standards, CA3)

Example Behaviors: 1. involving members of the community to participate in the classroom design 2. displaying cultural products of student work that reflect the students' traditions, customs, values, and practices. 3. providing cultural resources on a regular basis, i.e., books, web sites, brochures, speakers, that students can access.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

3. At our school, teachers incorporate students' traditions, customs, values, and practices to engage them in learning. (Cultural Standards, CA4)

Example Behaviors: 1. using activities related to traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students in class 2. demonstrating awareness of the nonverbal communication appropriate to the customs of the students 3. facilitating discussions with students about topics in which they are interested.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

4. At our school, teachers engage students in learning experiences that integrate the local environment, community resources, and issues when interacting with content. (Cultural Standards CB2)

Example Behaviors: 1. facilitating learning activities to support connections to the local environment and culture. 2. using the local environment, i.e. out- of-doors lessons, field trips, place based investigations, etc. 3. contextualizing academic content through local environment and culture

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

5. At our school, teachers provide rigorous learning opportunities for students that combine higher order thinking skills and student autonomy (from teacher-directed to student-directed). (Cultural Standards CE2) *

Example Educators: 1. organizing students in various ways to interact with content. 2. using strategies that challenge students to apply their knowledge in creative ways, i.e. problem solving, examining similarities and differences, etc. 3. facilitating culturally responsive discussions allowing students to apply critical thinking skills.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

6. At our school, teachers value and respect for all students of all cultures and challenge them to strive for educational excellence. (Cultural Standards CE3)

Example Behaviors: 1. interacting with students in culturally responsive ways, i.e. smiles, understanding nonverbal signs, etc. 3. promoting inclusion of diverse cultures. 4. modeling respect for all students. 5. encouraging students to achieve their full potential through scaffolding instruction and/or differentiation.

Choose: Not Using, Beginning, Developing, Applying, Innovating

7. To what degree do you agree with this statement: The Alaska Cultural Standards represent the critical practices and habits of mind for culturally responsive teaching.

Choose: Not at All True, Hardly True, Moderately True, Exactly True

8. To what degree do you agree with this statement: The Alaska Cultural Standards are widely implemented in our school.

Choose: Not at All True, Hardly True, Moderately True, Exactly True

9. To what degree do you agree with this statement: Culturally responsive teaching influences student self-efficacy and success in school.

Choose: Not at All, True, Hardly True, Moderately True, Exactly True

10. Which of the following practices do you consider to be MOST important for culturally responsive teaching?

1. making connections with the traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students
2. establishing a positive, respectful rapport with all students
3. establishing clear and rigorous academic expectations for all students
4. understanding the traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students
5. developing and implementing place-based, culturally responsive units of instruction

11. What do you see as the most significant challenge or barrier to implementing culturally responsive teaching in your school?

1. Pressure regarding standardized tests
2. Lack of flexibility of time within the school schedule and/or calendar
3. Lack of training and quality materials/resources
4. Lack of familiarity with local culture and community
5. Lack of quality professional development opportunities

12. What do you see as promising practices, programs or quality resources for culturally responsive teaching in your school, district, or elsewhere?

Please include websites, authors, program titles and/or any relevant information so that these programs and resources can be located.

Your answer: Text Box

13. How does culturally responsive teaching influence middle school students? Please select the area of greatest impact.

Engagement

Academic Achievement

Confidence/Self-Efficacy

Social/Emotional Well Being

None of the Above

Other: Please send an email message to srchristian@alaska.edu with this code: CRT2017. Upon receipt, your name will be entered into a drawing for a \$100 Visa Gift Card. Thank you for your participation!

Appendix D: Teacher and Principal Interview Questions

1. Could you talk about your heritage and your experiences in public education as a student?
2. What are the beliefs and practices of a culturally responsive teacher?
3. If this community and the parents of students in this school were to speak with one voice, what would they say are their expectations and hopes for graduates of this school system?
4. What do you consider to be promising practices or programs that incorporate culturally responsive teaching, or place-based curriculum in schools?
5. What are the challenges to enacting culturally responsive teaching in public schools?
6. If you were going to list the most important considerations for developing and implementing curriculum culturally responsive teaching what would you say?
7. How would you prepare teachers to develop and teach culturally responsive curriculum?
What is most important?
8. To what degree are students here prepared to walk in two worlds?

Appendix E: Sample Categorized Interview Responses to: What are the beliefs and practices of Culturally Responsive Teachers?

	Connections to local community, culture, history, place: rt8, rp 2, ut7, up 3, total 20
ut	At ASD schools especially at young ages they infuse native heritage and culture in the curriculum. As a student it was very prevalent.
ut	Getting to know students changes the whole game. You don't just teach from a textbook when that happens, you end up doing a little bit more pull-in from other resources, local resources, local people that might help out. Instead of just teaching according to whatever your text book says, you have to bring it <u>home</u> ... We're doing it currently where the kids can say ... "Oh, I know what that is," or "I've heard that before," and then they can start jumping in, then the buy-in becomes much higher. If you were just to teach from a textbook, it's like pulling teeth with sixth graders I find, but if you start talking about things that are happening in their daily lives, they tend there's more engagement, and there are more hands are firing up in the air. I mean, you just see the energy in the room go up.
ut	It was called Extreme Math, and I was able to do math projects. I did a kayak unit based on cultures in and around Alaska, southeast and up North. We were able to do a compare and contrast between the different types of kayaks they used and why they used them. It was really cool. It's like with Math in a Cultural Context, it makes a big difference with kids, and their interest, and liking school and wanting to be here...you see a big change in them.
ut	As a social studies teacher, I feel like it's my responsibility to be culturally responsive in the sense that I'm addressing some of the more hidden values in culture and not just sticking to holidays, foods, and styles of dress, activities, and the sort of concrete or surface level things that are taught in elementary. We discuss the concept of time, and the values of time and respect, things that are more abstract, that they haven't really thought about in school before.
rt	I think that the immediate response is how, where you are and how to get things that are relevant to the kids' lives into the classroom...a lot of times the books don't necessarily reflect what kids are familiar with. For that, I try to incorporate something that they understand rather than, like, elevators here, they don't understand that. Instead I change it to barges. I try to put something there that they can identify with that means something to them, rather than things that they're totally unfamiliar with, which goes for anywhere, whether you're in the south or up her.
rt	I think it's easier for them to, let me give you an example. We have a high school teacher here who is named after a local elder who passed away. He was a grandfather. This teacher treats his wife by calling her "her wife" even though she is a female because she's named after that elder. She takes on the role of that elder male and calls his wife, "her wife". All of his grandkids that are in school. She calls them by name and expects them to listen and tells them, "I'm going to tell your grandma if you don't listen." Things like that. She's taken on not just the name. Being culturally responsive is bringing that tradition into the classroom.
rt	Because I'm immersed in this culture and I lived here for so long, I point out our values constantly. I always tell them, "Yupik people do this. Yupik people don't do that. I don't think your parents will appreciate it if they know that you're doing this." I bring out all of those cultural values that I know with my students and I also work with them. I'm always using our culture as the <u>backbone</u> to how I expect my kids to behave. If I weren't from here, if I weren't Yupik or didn't know about the culture, I would definitely want to be open minded to things that I don't know about and if there's something that's brought up in class that I would ask another adult and find out about it.
rt	I definitely try to make our lessons relevant and meaningful. I try to localize them in any way that I can. When I taught science, I tried to tie in our local plants if we were on a plant cycle. If we were on a weather unit, I would call a local person who was very knowledgeable in predicting weather and ask them to come in and talk to my kids. When I taught high school media, every project we did had to be done with an elder in the village. They had to visit the elder to get that local knowledge.
rt	I think so. We have our dual language program, Rich is working on that, we also do our themes of the month, like hallway themes of the month, we try to incorporate some form of that. Last year,

	our overall overarching theme was what does it mean to be Yup'ik, living Kasigluk, going to Akiak Memorial School. Everything that we did was related.
rt	I think there should be a large number of materials...that would be culturally familiar to students which is certainly not what we operate with I think as a state. It's just not. I have a textbook of stories and it doesn't ... So many of them are a stretch. I think it's fine that some are a stretch but then they need a shared knowledge base to be able to really dive into a story the way that we want anyone to do.
rt	It's good not to have an agenda to project onto the students. Not to come out with a particular thing you feel like you need to teach them, whether it's a certain belief or even a lifestyle. I think the more open you are and reactive to show them how to learn, teach them to be thinkers, and then within their own environment, they'll be able to think through different things and bring that back to you. I think in terms of being culturally responsive, I think if we are creating learners rather than students, that they are going to use the materials at hand and that will be their belief systems, their local environment. If you can teach them the subjects within those systems and how to think about them, I think that'll do a lot in being able to retain the culture.
rt	We have a lot of people from the community that come in. Just the other day we had two people come in, a husband and wife and they built drums with the students. Built birch bark kind of baskets, just mock ups. Those were like two days spent where it was actually learning what type of wood, what season do we cut it down because it's going to be dryer. Those were instruments to learn about the different subjects within a cultural experience.
rt	Culturally responsive teachers believe that a culturally responsive teacher encourages the kids to learn about the cultures that they live in. Not only the cultures that are in their house, but in the community, in their school, in their classroom, and tries to encourage them to explore those different outlets. To embrace all the differences and not get hung up on all the differences. I believe that's probably the key aspect, is to just expose them to what's out there, so that they're not stuck in just one mindset.
ut	Language is the skeleton of the culture. You lose the language, everything is going to melt into a puddle and not have context. The language is the context. I mean, you can tell a story in English that's been translated from Tlingit, but it loses context.
ut	Sealaska Logging has yellow and red cedar that they're happy to donate to my students so it offsets the cost of an expensive program. It gets us a little bit more resources. Plus, they have a carver who has a bunch of skills that are way beyond my skills, so we have a professional carver coming in, and it's just building my program. The projects that come out of there have that, wow, you made it. We get formline design. We get bentwood boxes. We've done really nice, big paddles. We've done some cool deer calls.
ut	I think it would be specific to place. For me at least, I feel like making that connection to place in real life for the students, so something they're familiar with whether it's this place as in Juneau or things that they're interested in. I have a whole bunch of little athletes, so I always connect our math ... Whatever we're learning about in math, I can usually tie it into sports. Making those connections to hook the interest of students so it's relevant to them. Then with science, we're right here in southeast Alaska, and it's so much to connect it to. We did earth science this year and being able to connect all of it locally ... We did earthquakes this year, so connecting to the 1964 earthquake and the impact that that had on Alaska but also on geology and the whole study of geology and that connection to students as Alaskans that led the science of geology.
up	To find and then empower and facilitate real cultural experts. It can't be someone my color thing is ... You need people who are experts in a culture, whether that be native people or someone who has studied and really mastered what that cultures all about to really facilitate a deeper level of cultural education.
rp	A culturally responsive teacher incorporates aspects of the student's life, incorporates what the surroundings are, what the culture is and helps the student not only to learn the Western ideals of what's important, largely reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also provides a format for the student to further his knowledge of one's own culture and other cultures throughout the world too, not just the local culture. A lot of place-based learning takes part, place-based learning and because when you can tap into the interest of the student, you've got a leg up on them understanding why this is important.

up	They believe that every student is an individual who comes with their own set of experiences and backgrounds, including culture and traditions, and what they do is they make sure that they design and they implement lessons that recognize that within their students, and find ways to connect to those aspects of the individual students into the broader lesson.
up	We love kids. We love them. And we spend a lot of time on working on those relationships. We spend a lot of time training our teachers to build those relationships and to make those kids feel like when they come here it's safe, and they have a family.
rp	One of the things that I find that gave us an advantage within the classroom is that if you, as an individual, has made a connection within the community, whether by adopting yourself into the community and being a part of a family dynamic where you're able to go into a family home and have dinner with them and interact with them and converse about this and that. The experiences that I've seen, the most effect teachers that come from the outside work within the community, they've established themselves with a family or an extended family group or a network of families where they're interacting and it's a two-way street.

	Relationships: rt4, rp 1, ut 3, up 4, total 12
ut	The way you build relationships (w/students) is culturally sensitive.
ut	The teacher catered the course to help students immerse themselves, not just in classrooms, but in the school. Once they (students) felt welcomed, then they felt like the school system was their own. They actually took charge of their own education and became successful.
rt	I think a teacher who is able to accept the student, and are able to teach the student from their background knowledge is responsive. Like trying to build their schema and trying to meet them where they are. I see it here too. It's a lot of individuality, you need a lot of individual time, to build a relationship. And after school is over, I encourage the students because they're kind of required to stay ... and everybody else who is not doing well also. And during after school, we have a lot of individual face to face conversation about homework. They know I care.
rt	Especially, living in such a small community, we are a family, these are our kids, we have them for four or five years at a time, and we see them grow up, and so they really do become a part of our family. You have to help them understand the problems that are going on in their life and how to handle them appropriately.
rt	I think because everybody does take the time to create those relationships with everyone... There's a really strong, positive vibe here at this school and you notice it as soon as you talk to our kids or you meet with our kids and that students that transfer in that have had behavior problems at other schools don't really have that issue as much here. Like I had one student that just transferred and he just told his aunt, he goes, "They treat me better here..."
rt	I think getting an opportunity to be in the classroom and spending time getting to know students, is what's happening most in my different experiences. Because building those relationships is what makes it a lot easier and if you understand how to do that, it makes your life a lot easier.
ut	You need to be present, you need to show that you care, like in this school... There's as much interaction and knowing, "Okay. How was your night last night?" Or "What'd you do this weekend?" Or "Hey. What do you think about this?" Like, really, genuinely want to know their opinions. We couldn't get anything like what we get done here if we didn't feel like a family. So, I treat my students like a family, that's just what works for me. I treat my colleagues like they're my brothers and sisters, so when things go down it affects me personally because that's who I am.
up	The biggest thing that I want teachers to do is to form relationships with kids, above anything else, you put any teaching practice aside, I don't care what they do, they can give lectures for all I care, as long as they have relationships with kids, because that's what our kids want. They want to know that they're validated, they want to know that someone sees them, cares about them, that they're interested, that they want to be their teacher.
up	In a real general level, it's a human thing. It's building relationships with people, the belief that relationships come first. That your way of doing things, or your way of knowing is not necessarily the right way, or the only way. It's a way. And so, multiple ways of knowing and looking at the world are valid and have value. And that openness, acceptance, an open-mind, open heart, the ability to embrace different people of different cultures and see them as human and build relationships

up	However, the thing that it (culturally responsive teaching) keeps coming down to...is the social and emotional needs of our students and the cultural aspects of that. What it boils down to every time when I really think about what does it mean to be culturally responsive? What does it mean to be identifying and addressing the social-emotional needs of our kids? The only way that is successful, the only way that works, the only way you can do any of that is by having relationships, quality relationships with students." Whenever I ask students, I ask them a lot. "Hey, what's your favorite class?" They always say, "It's Mr. or Mrs. so and so." They don't say it's Science. They don't say it's Math. They name the <u>teacher</u> . They are not doing that to indicate it's not about the subject but in their mind, the class is the teacher. The class is not the subject. The class is the teacher.
rp	Teachers must have flexibility. I think just with the last 3 years of experience and I don't know if it's normal for just us since this has only been my experience out here or if it's just across the nation, when you come out to a village, these kids don't sit down. They're constantly moving. Yelling at a kid that can't sit still for 5 minutes doesn't help anybody. We've had a whole string of different teachers with different personalities and different expectations of students. I think the more respect you give to the kids, the more respect they're going to give to you. Kids are kids. If they want to lay on the floor and work, then let them lay on the floor and work. They're not sleeping. If they're honestly working, then I don't see an issue with that. Just being flexible and respectful of everybody and willing to listen.
up	Responsive teachers get to know students, they build positive relationships with students and they honor them and respect them. That's not always easy in large classes, but that's what it takes.

	Teacher as Learner: rt 6, rp 1, ut 3, up 1, total 11
rt	It's about how people live and what's daily life for people and how the culture itself, the environment, is different. When I'm in the lower 48, I would think more about, the kids have been in a school room or they have a certain kind of structure throughout their lives, meaning just you get up when the sun comes up, you go to bed when the sun goes down. When you come to Alaska, that structure isn't here. You have to understand that and adapt to it. Other things are ... Just the daily life is different and you have to adapt to it. You are not here to <u>change them</u> . What I found, in my ninth year in Bush, Alaska, is that they tend to <u>change me</u> . I think that has to do with being culturally responsive and understanding that no matter where you're at, you're going to have kids that have a lot on their plate. Sometimes it's more important to teach them coping skills or expression than Math. ... Math is really important and I get that, but sometimes they need to see other things also...I learned great patience being a Bush, Alaska teacher. I learned ... It's just changed ... I was afraid. When I left I was very concerned about not being able to have classroom management as it is expected, because in Bush, Alaska, you have kids that, have great big hearts, and very few coping skills. What you feel is normal for a classroom is not normal elsewhere. I was very concerned about that. I found out, and I had several students tell me, "You've been so patient with me," so that in me has changed. Look around, I've got word walls! I would have never done that before.... My eighth graders today were learning to write equations from word problems. We write them and read them at the same time so they can see where this is the sentence, this is the algebraic expression for it. I was pleasantly surprised that they are all getting it now. I think it's relevant. Being in algebra, sometimes it's difficult to get that. To take problems, when you're doing basic things it's good, but when you're doing maybe a cost and profit and revenue, to be able to take something the kids are used to and bring it to there is much more difficult. I think just being relevant to the students where ever they are, trying to get them to see math other places. I had been up here about three years. I was able to teach geometry to one class. A girl came in and said, "Every time I see snow machine tracks now I think, 'Oh, my goodness. Those are parallel lines. Look, there's a transversal!'" It's just, it's changed my outlook on life. It's changed what I find valuable and what I used to find valuable. To me, that all has to do with cultural responsiveness and perspective.

rt	You have to be willing to adapt to the culture...to prove yourself to the community that you are willing to dig in and get dirty and be gung-ho about it. You want them (teachers) to use the traditions. That's were your respect of land, respect of animals , respect of each other comes in. You have to be open to new experiences. Not seeing something that you don't know anything about and making a judgement , because the way they live is different.
ut	Flexibility, as a middle school teacher, I can say that not one of my lesson plans in my entire career has gone the way I expected it to go.
ut	All teachers should be taught about the culture no matter where they are. That way they can understand the trials and tribulations that those people have actually experienced in any culture. In order for a teacher to be successful they need to understand their students... All they (teachers from outside) know is the Gold Rush and all the great things that happened to make Alaska what it is today. They don't understand what How many generations back that for instance My Grandmother and my Grandfather were taken out of their homes at the age of five years old, put into a missionary school and beaten for speaking their language. A lot of teachers don't understand that generational grief....
ut	If I know where they're coming from (students) and what their interests are, the buy-in is much higher. Whether id cultural background, or where they came from, what it's like their home, what it's like in their families. You have to...get to know students, and getting to know what their lives are like outside of the classroom. Families that I'm able to touch base with early on in the year have a lot of insight....so that I'm more aware of how to help them, academically, socially and emotionally.
rt	As a culturally responsive teacher I think that they need to first experience all that they can within the Yupik culture. Not just read about it, talk about it, they need to <u>experience it</u> to actually understand it. Not just staying up in teacher housing, but actually going out to the village and visiting the locals in their homes to see exactly what goes on in their lives. I think that teacher is knowledgeable about the culture, the activities, how Yupik people respond to things, respond to certain activities like when there's a death in the village. They should know what the local customs are regarding that. They should know why Yupik people think the way that they do about certain things. Why they have feasts, why they have throwing parties, why they celebrate Slavic the way that they do. All those different things, so that they have the background for the kids that they're serving. And, they know that they are serving kids.
rt	For me, it was getting to understand the community, getting myself out there, not just getting to know the community, but letting them know me and not being scared to share stuff about myself. They're just as interested about me, as I am about culture and I can't help them understand their culture if I can't explain from my own point of view. Getting to know the community and getting out and getting involved, really helped because then you know who to talk to, you know how to bring them into the school...You have to be vulnerable in the sense that you're not always the expert on everything, you don't know everything and that kids aren't always talking about you. I let that go a long time ago. But you just have to be vulnerable with them. It's okay not to know something and I think it takes some people a long time because they're like, "No, no, I'm the teacher and I should be the one that's teaching the stuff."
rt	Like I tell my kids all of the time, "I'm learning just as long as you are." My job ... I'm not the master of all things, you learn stuff out of the community that I can never teach you and our learning doesn't stop at the door. You're not just learning here, you're not just learning at home, but there's ways to bring it all together and create assignments that integrate both of them. That's a lot of what I try to do, is try to figure out ways to put them both together, like today you saw that I had an elder in, but then I brought in technology and brought it into what we were learning in the curriculum.
rt	I grew up as a cultural majority person and I went to a suburban high school and I wasn't very aware of my own culture and heritage as being anything remarkable. When I moved to Alaska I was in Anchorage and I worked as a bilingual tutor, which then led to a lot of thinking about what kind of assets people bring as a part of their culture. That caused me to reflect on my own. I could describe some pieces of my own culture that I've become more aware of . I am aware of foundational thinking and beliefs that are a part of me, that are part of my culture that aren't necessarily part of my neighbor's culture... Okay. I always have to do a little introspection here.

	Recently I identified that culturally for me picking up someone's baby is a little invasive. I had children here and was glad that people love my kids and picked them up. I wasn't bothered by that. But I just recently became aware that I think I might seem a little standoff-ish or cold because I hesitate to just pick up someone's child. I was identifying... like I think because my upbringing would suggest that is a little disrespectful or invasive to that family... or maybe I don't have permission or I don't know them well enough? There's one tiny thing out of many.
up	You know part of that sort of double sided coin (walking in two worlds) with being a culturally responsive teacher is understanding that you're a learner. I think a culturally responsive teacher is a learner. Somebody who goes in to a village not thinking I've really have teach these kids English and Math, but going in thinking I'm going to do the best I can to teach the stuff we need to know, and I also want to learn as much as possible. I want to learn about this culture. The ways that they do things, and I've always been blessed to get to go out move something and go out and pull halibut and watch halibut fileted and the cheeks cut out and all the different parts used. To go to a house and get to try caribou insides and all the different parts that people eat that we don't think of eating.
rp	Okay, so the first thing that I would say to really be successful, the first step that I would look for when I'm interviewing and things like that is an honest self-awareness. I think to be successful in a rural community; in a community that has a general culture that is not familiar to you before you come out here. You need to know who you are and what makes you happy, and what realistically you can cannot live with. What causes you happiness and knowing that ahead of time is ... I don't see people who are successful for very long out here if they haven't identified that. In identifying that, recognizing what that they could or could not survive out here. Just to know "I like to go to bars on Fridays" is not going to help you be successful just knowing it, but knowing it and then thinking ahead of time it would be a fit. Because you live out here in addition to being a successful teacher out here. With that in mind, if a teacher comes in and is aware of themselves and cares about students as individuals, then the rest of it can be modeled and can be learned. I haven't found teachers who recognize who they are, and their strengths, and the things that challenge them, and see students as individuals, and after all of that want to be the kind of teacher that just delivers a Smart board or PowerPoint presentation and says "Go."

	Empathy: rt 5, rp 2, ut 0, up 0, total 7
rt	I think teachers need to, up here especially, need patience and understanding, and that's not something anybody can teach you. You've got to learn that yourself. Empathy, understanding, you've got to look at big pictures, and your students and not just the objectives that you've written on your lesson plans.
rt	I think it's the same where ever you go. Kids are kids everywhere. They all have problems. They all have successes. They all have struggles just like everybody else. It doesn't matter where you're at, you have to remember that you're there for them. It's not just a job. It is, how can I make ... My daughter is in the restaurant business. When she has a customer that is upset, even though it has nothing to do with the service or the server or the food or anything, her response is, "How can I make this experience better for you?" I feel like teachers need to think that way rather than, "This kid isn't doing this," or, "This kid is ... " How can I make this experience better for this student who is not successful and doesn't want to here? I think that it kind of comes down to that.
rt	(A culturally responsive teacher) understands where they come from, no matter where they are. Or tries to at least, and just accepts the students for who they are. I think my most inspirational teacher; I had one who was native at Mount Edgecumbe, and the other who was non-native was in my middle school years. And it's nothing to do with academics, <i>but it was more like in her classroom I started to like who I was because she accepted who I was personally and I saw her accepting everybody else there too.</i> I see it here too.... Everyone came together, and every teacher, they're very loving.
rt	You have to understand that they walk in the door with those problems and you can't change those problems, but you can help create an environment where they feel safe and comfortable to come to school and to learn and how to make safe decisions, trying to deal with those problems. I

	had one student that we really turned a corner, in the fact that, I explained to him where I came from and I understood that certain things that are going on in his life I've seen, and gone through, and I understand him, and that it's okay. That's why we're here, he's not just some person that comes to school and I don't think about after school, that we think about him all day long and he's constantly on our mind, that we're a family here.
rt	If you're in the village you definitely see where they're going and where they're coming from. We do home visits here... we do them so that we can see where they're from so we can provide that support so that they can see us beyond the classroom, but it's amazing how empathy booms quickly once you've done a home visit. Even the kids, once they've seen you in their home and you're not there to judge. It's like she came to my house and she didn't just come to my house, she came in and she sat wherever and she didn't bat an eye. She doesn't care about things. She wants me to learn. Sometimes I'm out for a walk and I do stop because I want to see someone because I know that that helps, but yeah you have to have empathy.
rp	Well, what I hope for teachers is for them to be reflective. I think that's the most important piece, because we're all looking at it through our own lens of what we grew up with, and where we've been. When they frame responses through that lens, a lot of times it causes friction. What I'm trying to get people to do is to look at the larger community, and to get a better scope of why it is kids come in this way, why kids respond this way, some of the colloquialisms that kids use. They mean one thing if you're looking at it through a white middle class lens, and another if you're looking at it through a Yup'ik person's lens. It's about empathy and reflection. There's certain pieces in the curriculum that, they're just what they are, but trying to vocalize this exactly the way I think about it. To understand the fact that quite a few of the kids don't have the experiential knowledge that we do, they're only looking at it through their lens. It's incumbent upon the teacher, to not only look at it through their lens, but to also look at it through the kid's lens. Whereas you shouldn't have that same expectation for the kids.
rp	That it's (culturally responsive teaching) not so much the curricular piece that is important, and it's something to think about, but to be culturally responsive, you need to know students as individuals and to be able to respond to them in ways that you're really communicating that there's really a mutual understanding that you understand that student's particular context. Personally, culturally, all those kinds of things.

	Alaska Cultural Standards: rt 0, rp 2, ut 2, up 1, total 5
ut	I took a multi-cultural class. We went over the cultural standards and we practiced using them. But, they are a little confusing and hot to incorporate them into Science is just another challenge.
ut	Some of the really good teachers, they don't teach about culture. They teach through the culture in the sense that they're going to immerse students. We have several teachers in the district that right now, actually teach through the culture in the sense that they immerse their students on a daily basis.
up	If you're going to have standards, and the expectation is that these standards will be implemented, then there should be some checks and balances to ensure that it is happening. So, where are the checks and balances at the state level for these standards? We've put a lot of money into developing these standards - and, I would say, for the most part, you'd probably see more of it evident in smaller communities in rural areas than you would in urban areas. However, in the urban areas, I would say it's needed even more and I think it starts with the leadership.
rp	I think the intent is good as far as the Alaska State Cultural Standards go. They do only scratch the surface. I do realize that but here's another thought to even challenge the institutional norm. I'm originally from here, this area right here. I've been working here for nearly 20 years as far as being a part of the school system. At what point is my work be considered a part of the local culture versus the western culture? Because I do consider myself Yup'ik and I know for a fact the decisions I make influence what happens here. When do you stop labeling it a western

	educational system versus an educational system that has the element of incorporating some of the values from indigenous culture here?
rp	At the risk of offending you or anyone who would be researching, I think it's (culturally responsive teaching) not defined well in our cultural standards or in the definition. I don't think the state of Alaska's really come out, in my opinion, with anything that really characterizes anything that I've seen. Beyond helping your students feel welcome in the classroom and respecting that people come from different cultures, I almost wonder if that's really the way we go about things.

	Walking in Two Worlds (Western and Indigenous): rt1, rp 2, ut 0, up 1 total 4
rt	We live in a dual world right now. The subsistence in the traditional lifestyle grounds them (local citizens) in their identity. Tells them who they are...where they come from. It gives you confidence in yourself that you can't really get if you're not entrenched in your culture... They use what they can from Western Society to enrich their lifestyle.
up	I've always believed that the most successful people in rural Alaska, especially Alaskan Natives, are those who are able to navigate and walk in both cultures. My mother in law's one of those people. She's very, very comfortable and she can converse in their native language. Her mom was a fluent speaker and she's comfortable in her culture and I've learned a lot of cultural things from her. Yet she has been the vice president of the school board there for 20 years. Runs the village corporation. So, walks both worlds very successfully.... That's the pie in the sky, that you can be successful in your village and your community and culture and not have to leave that behind or lose those values, yet be successful in the western world structure that we have to live in, whether we like it or not.
rp	What I have had laid out as a descriptor, I do feel that is a clear illustration of the outcome ideal of a stable structure. Whether you apply that to people or communities or any other system. I don't quite feel like we're dialed in yet here. The biggest piece to complete that tetrahedron (A Yupiaq Worldview, Kawagley, 2006) for our school is the community. Finding ways to bridge the gap between the school and the community so that you approach it holistically and it's a symbiosis between one meeting the other where the school isn't greater than the community, the community isn't greater than the school. Supporting it so that the student has that foundation with both entities. That, to me, would complete that foundation so that, for instance, I need parental support, just like that I get parental support. I know that's not such in some other communities I've worked in.
rp	This is something from what I've gathered, is not easily taught. You either have it or you don't. Those teachers that do have that level of interpersonal skills that they can develop, they're the ones that are going above and beyond, and taking the educational curriculum, incorporating these students' worldview and finding a happy balance between students feeling like they're able to truly walk in both worlds. There's their personal lives in community celebrated, at the same time they're looking at the global perspective of where education can take them.

	High Expectations: rt 1, rp 2, ut 0, up 1, total 4
rt	I think that's changed (what it takes to be a responsive teacher), how I will define that has changed over time. I think it's come to be more about having high expectations and supporting kids to meet your expectations. I just think our students often seem so behind with tests or their grade level or their reading level but they have a great capacity to learn. I don't know all the reasons why they get behind..... It turned my stomach, a few months ago I heard a teacher ... not from here. I heard a teacher say, "They just have too high of expectations. It's too much pressure on those kids." I was like, "No, our kids need to know that we believe they can accomplish great things." Then we need to do the work of helping them get there. I think that includes being culturally relevant like why does it matter? If it's not relevant to their lives it doesn't matter very much.
up	Teachers need to have high expectations for all students. They have to have those expectations and then differentiate instruction and engage students so that they meet those expectations.
rp	Teachers need to realize that any child can learn. Any student has an immense capacity of learning. They need to be challenged a little bit beyond the students' comfort level. There should

	be a dynamic back and forth, with teachers able to converse back and forth with the student and having a dialogue about continuing their learning process.
rp	Those high expectations have been established and wherever we come short in reaching that, then we're making use of the RTI (Response to Intervention) process that's put in place by the school district within the three tiers of students, because I do feel like students in tier one, that our "at grade level" students are just as needy as those that are struggling in tier three that at times within the most remedial of levels. Every student, regardless of who they are have a need to continue advancing their education from where they're at on to the expected norm and beyond. High expectations are very important for all students.

	Students as Teachers: rt 1, rp 0, ut 2, up 0, total 3
ut	We were talking about ecosystems and fishing and students had wonderful ideas and shared their experiences with their families on different ways that they fish.
rt	I always think about ... since one of my students, like along with getting to know your kids also, is the fact that you can learn when they can be the expert in class. Which is important cuz I've done stuff where like we were doing science lessons and we were learning about seals cuz we were learning about the loss of sea ice. I have a student that goes seal hunting, so then he was able to explain to the class like what is certain part of it mean. Like what are they looking for and why is it harder this year then it was last year?
ut	I think the belief in all students that they can succeed is at the very heart of that (culturally responsive teaching). Teaching students who they are and acknowledging what they bring into your classroom and that wealth of knowledge that each student brings to the classroom and that they could share with as teachers and with their peers.

Appendix F: Example Rating Scale from the iObservation Tool

▼ CA2: Supporting New Content with Cultural Connections

[Remove](#)

Focus Statement: The educator integrates and connects traditions, customs, values, and practices of the students when interacting with new content.

Desired Effect: Students make connections between their cultural backgrounds and new content.

Evidences:

▼ Example Student Behaviors:

- ☐ Students discuss their traditions, customs, values, and practices and how it relates to new content.
- ☐ Students are highly engaged.
- ☐ Student artifacts demonstrate cultural connections to the content being taught.
- ☐ Students can explain how the content connects to their cultural background and heritage.

▼ Example Educator Behaviors:

- ☐ Educator uses previewing activities and or relevant "hooks" to help students make connections between content and their traditions, customs, values, and practices.
- ☐ Educator involves community guests to illuminate connections between content and the students' traditions, customs, values, and practices.
- ☐ Educator can describe how cultural connections within the unit contribute toward understanding of the content.
- ☐ Educator integrates cross-curricular cultural connections to content.
- ☐ Educator asks questions of students that require students to make inferences between their cultural background and content.

Appendix G: Student Self-Efficacy Survey

Please select one best answer for each question.

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
11. My culture is respected at school.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
12. I'm proud of my culture when I'm at school.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.
13. At school, we learn about local culture and history.
1. Not at all true. 2. Hardly true. 3. Moderately true. 4. Exactly true.

Appendix H: UAF Institutional Review Board Approval



Institutional Review Board

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June 14, 2016

To: Ute Kaden, PhD
Principal Investigator
From: University of Alaska Fairbanks IRB
Re: [906630-1] Influences of Culturally Responsive Teaching On Student Self-Efficacy and Success in Alaskan Middle Schools

Thank you for submitting the New Project referenced below. The submission was handled by Expedited Review under the requirements of 45 CFR 46.110, which identifies the categories of research eligible for expedited review.

Title:	Influences of Culturally Responsive Teaching On Student Self-Efficacy and Success in Alaskan Middle Schools
Received:	May 10, 2016
Expedited Category:	7
Action:	APPROVED
Effective Date:	June 14, 2016
Expiration Date:	June 14, 2017

This action is included on the June 8, 2016 IRB Agenda.

No changes may be made to this project without the prior review and approval of the IRB. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in research scope, research tools, consent documents, personnel, or record storage location.